THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

TRANSLATION OF
"PASEO DE LA REFORMA"

BY

MELANIE JOY JOHANNESEN ©

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS

IN

HISPANIC AND LATIN AMERICAN STUDIES

DEPARTMENT OF MODERN LANGUAGES & CULTURAL STUDIES

EDMONTON, ALBERTA

FALL 2000

National Library
of Canada

Acquisitions and
Bibliographic Services

395 Wellington Street
Ottawa ON K1A 0N4
Canada

Bibliothèque nationale
du Canada

Acquisitions et
services bibliographiques

395, rue Wellington
Ottawa ON K1A 0N4
Canada

Your file Votre référence

Our file Notre référence

The author has granted a non-exclusive licence allowing the National Library of Canada to reproduce, loan, distribute or sell copies of this thesis in microform, paper or electronic formats.

L'auteur a accordé une licence non exclusive permettant à la Bibliothèque nationale du Canada de reproduire, prêter, distribuer ou vendre des copies de cette thèse sous la forme de microfiche/film, de reproduction sur papier ou sur format électronique.

The author retains ownership of the copyright in this thesis. Neither the thesis nor substantial extracts from it may be printed or otherwise reproduced without the author's permission.

L'auteur conserve la propriété du droit d'auteur qui protège cette thèse. Ni la thèse ni des extraits substantiels de celle-ci ne doivent être imprimés ou autrement reproduits sans son autorisation.

0-612-59727-X

Canada

University of Alberta

Library Release Form

Name of Author: Melanie Johannesen

Title of Thesis: Translation of "Paseo de la Reforma"

Degree: Master of Arts

Year this Degree Granted: 2000

Permission is hereby granted to the University of Alberta Library to reproduce single copies of this thesis and to lend or sell such copies for private, scholarly or scientific research purposes only.

The author reserves all other publications and other rights in association with the copyright in the thesis, and except as herein before provided, neither the thesis nor any substantial portion thereof may be printed or otherwise reproduced in any material form whatever without the author's prior written permission.

1065 Falconer Road
Edmonton, Alberta
Canada
T6R 2C9

Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research on September 28, 2000

ABSTRACT

This thesis consists of a translation of the first nine chapters of Elena Poniatowska's *Paseo de la Reforma* (1996). The translation is followed by notes giving the reader a richer understanding of some of the words, people, places, and historical events mentioned in the novel.

Paseo de la Reforma is the story of Ashby Egbert, member of one of Mexico's most privileged families, who experiences a different side of his country after an accident lands him in a public hospital. He falls in love with Amaya, an eccentric woman who gets him involved in political activism, and who is eventually killed by the police. With her death, Ashby's false idealism also dies, and he returns to his former privileged life.

The translation is preceded by an introduction consisting of biographical information on the author, a thematic analysis *of Paseo de la Reforma*, and a discussion of the major issues encountered when translating the novel.

University of Alberta

Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research

The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled *Translation of "Paseo de la Reforma"* submitted by Melanie Joy Johannesen in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Hispanic and Latin American Studies.

Robert T Thornberry Dr. Robert Thornberry (Supervisor)

Dr. Marisa Bortolussi

David C. Johnson Dr. David Johnson

26 th September 2000
Date approved by committee

RESUMEN

Esta tesis consiste en una traducción de los primeros nueve capítulos de la novela *Paseo de la Reforma* (1996), de Elena Poniatowska. Unas notas siguen a la traducción para dar al lector una comprensión más rica de las palabras, personas, lugares y eventos históricos mencionados en el texto.

Paseo de la Reforma es la historia de Ashby Egbert, miembro de una de las familias más privilegiadas de México, que vive un aspecto diferente de su país después de un accidente que lo obliga a quedarse en un hospital público. Se enamora de Amaya, una mujer excéntrica que lo envuelve en el activismo político, y quien es asesinada eventualmente por la policía. Como resultado de su muerte, el falso idealismo de Ashby también muere y él regresa a su vida pasada y privilegiada.

Una introducción precede la traducción, que consiste en información biográfica de la autora, un análisis temático de *Paseo de la Reforma* y una discusión de los asuntos más notables que encontré al traducir la novela.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would especially like to thank my supervisor, Professor Robert Thornberry, who spent countless hours working with me on this thesis and who gave me a greater appreciation for the beauty of language and the translation process. I would also like to thank Professor Marisa Bortolussi and Professor David Johnson for agreeing to be part of my examination committee, as well as for their positive feedback and comments.

I would also like to thank my parents, Simon and Dorothy Tiemstra, and my husband, Fred Johannesen, who have always given me their full support for all of my educational endeavors.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER PAGE

I. INTRODUCCIÓN

La autora 1

La obra 9

Problemas de traducción 21

II. TRANSLATION

Chapter 1 41

Chapter 2 56

Chapter 3 66

Chapter 4 78

Chapter 5 85

Chapter 6 96

Chapter 7 110

Chapter 8 118

Chapter 9 130

Notes 145

WORKS CONSULTED AND CITED 156

La autora

No sería una exageración decir que Elena Poniatowska es una de las escritoras más conocidas y respetadas de México y, de hecho, de Latinoamérica. Se destaca por su creatividad y la cantidad de diversos géneros literarios en que escribe. Sus obras han recibido mucha atención crítica y han sido traducidas al inglés, francés, alemán, italiano, holandés, polaco, checoeslovaco, ruso, danés, sueco, noruego, japonés y otras lenguas.

Poniatowska nació en París el 19 de mayo de 1933. Su madre, Paula Amor de Poniatowski, era una mexicana que nació en Francia, hija de ricos terratenientes mexicanos que perdieron sus tierras pero no su dinero en 1920 después del triunfo de las fuerzas revolucionarias en la Revolución Mexicana. Su padre, Juan Evremont Poniatowski Sperry, era un francés de orígenes polacos aristocráticos. Elena y su hermana Kitzia pasaron en Francia los primeros años de su vida, pero en 1942 las hermanas emigraron con su madre a México, cuando Elena tenía 9 años, a causa de la Segunda Guerra Mundial. Su padre se quedó en Francia, luchando con la resistencia francesa contra los nazis y no se transladó a México hasta 1947.

En México Poniatowska vivió con su abuela materna, y Elena y su hermana asistieron a escuelas privadas donde la enseñanza era en inglés. Su lengua materna era el francés y Poniatowska aprendió a hablar español de los sirvientes domésticos en su casa. Esta es la razón por la cual, según Beth Jorgensen, hay un "sabor especial de provincia en el habla de la escritora". Jorgensen también comenta que "el hecho de aprender de esta forma el lenguaje de su nuevo país creó un tipo de lazo lingüístico que la une con la gente de otras clases sociales" (1986: 2). Elena terminó sus estudios secundarios en el Convento del Sagrado Corazón, una escuela particular católica cerca de Filadelfia. Es ahí donde llegó a dominar el inglés además del francés y el español. De las tres lenguas, es interestante que eligiera el español como la lengua en que escribiría.

Poniatowska comenzó su carrera en 1954 como periodista, y primero escribió para *Excélsior*, uno de los mejores diarios de la capital. A causa de sus orígenes obviamente elitistas, fue inmediatamente encasillada como una columnista en la sección de sociedades. En su empleo, Poniatowska entrevistó a figuras importantes del mundo literario, musical, artístico, cultural y político. En 1955 empezó a trabajar para *Novedades*, otro periódico de la capital para el que ha continuado trabajando hasta hoy en día.

Los lectores de Poniatowska saben que las cualidades más destacadas de sus obras son su fuerte conexión con la situación social, económica y política del México contemporáneo, y su preocupación por la vida de los sectores tradicionalmente marginados y reprimidos de la sociedad mexicana. A menudo sus textos tratan la relación entre los diferentes niveles de la sociedad mexicana y la lucha de las mujeres y los pobres para ganar justicia económica y social. Aunque no ha sido encasillada por los críticos como una "escritora feminista", Poniatowska sí se considera feminista: De sí misma escribe:

> Soy absolutamente feminista, lo que para mí significa estar del lado de las mujeres, apoyarlas, participar en actos en que pueda servir de algo. Desde hace años pertenezco a la revista *Fem.*, que iniciaron Alaide Foppa, Margarita García Flores, Marta Lamas, Flora Bottom y Elena Urrutia.

> Me inicié como feminista hace muchos años, pero no soy una teórica del feminismo, soy una feminista por inclinación natural (Ascencio 84).

Un examen de las obras que Poniatowska ha escrito en el curso de su carrera muestra la diversidad y el carácter híbrido de su escritura. Ha escrito ficción y no ficción, cuentos y novelas, y a menudo ella entreteje ficción y no ficción en la misma obra. Según Jorgensen son cuatro las directivas fundamentales de la obra de Poniatowska: "la importancia del diálogo como una fuente del texto escrito; el elemento colaborativo de sus libros; su uso creativo de la voz narradora; y su compromiso social" (1986: 10).

Su primera publicación literaria, *Lilus Kikus* (1954), es una serie de 12 cuentos semi-autobiográficos contados desde el punto de vista de una niña privilegiada que crece en la Ciudad de México. Años después, esos cuentos fueron publicados en una colección con doce nuevos entitulada *Los cuentos de Lilus Kikus* (1967). Su única obra teatral, *Melés y Teleo* (1956) es un drama satírico sobre los intelectuales mexicanos. *Palabras cruzadas* (1961), es una colección de entrevistas hechas por Poniatowksa entre 1954 y 1961, cuando estaba trajabando para los periódicos *Excélsior* y *Novedades*. Un poco después publicó *Todo empezó el domingo* (1963), la primera obra en que Poniatowska relata la vida cotidiana de las clases pobres en la Ciudad de México.

Hasta no verte Jesús mío (1969) es una de las obras más conocidas de Elena Poniatowska y es uno de los íconos del género testimonial en Latinoamérica. De hecho, la obra es difícil de clasificar dentro de los géneros establecidos. Resulta difícil decidir si es novela, testimonio, largo reportaje o reportaje novelado. Poniatowska trabajó en la obra por más de cinco años. El libro cuenta la vida desde la Revolución Mexicana hasta tiempos más recientes desde el punto de vista de Jesusa Palancares, un personaje basado en una verdadera conocida de Poniatowska, Josefina Bórquez. Es el resultado de un año de entrevistas con la protagonista que tuvieron lugar de 1963-1964 y ha sido el tema de mucha consideración crítica. En 1996 llegó a su trigésima edición (Szanto 25).

La Noche de Tlatelolco (1971) es probablemente su obra más conocida y es la más leída de todas las obras que tratan la tragedia de Tlatelolco. Es esta la obra, además de *Hasta no verte Jesús mío*, que la convirtió en una escritora mundialmente conocida. Es su expresión de horror después de la masacre de los estudiantes que occurrió el 2 de octubre de 1968 en la Plaza de las Tres Culturas en Tlatelolco. Este evento fue la culminación trágica de varios meses de manifestaciones estudiantiles en el campus de la Universidad Nacional de México en 1968, a las que Poniatowska alude en *Paseo de la Reforma*. El gobierno quería poner fin a los tres meses de manifestaciones a causa de los Juegos Olímpicos que iban a tener lugar en La Ciudad de México ese año. El gobierno quería dar la imagen más positiva posible del país porque México iba a ser la primera nación de Latinoamérica sede de los Juegos, y, de hecho, el primer país del "tercer mundo". Aunque el gobierno mexicano emprendió una campaña masiva de propaganda para encubrir lo que pasó en Tlatelolco, la mayoría de los historiadores ahora estiman que aproximadamente trescientas personas murieron en la masacre.

La noche de Tlatelolco está basada en los testimonios de muchas personas diferentes desde distintos puntos de vista, artística y eficazmente arreglados por la autora para dar un collage expositivo de la masacre como uno de los momentos más impresionantes en toda la historia mexicana. Hay testimonios fragmentados de estudiantes, profesores, madres, políticos, policías, obreros, participantes y transeúntes inocentes. Poniatowska también incluye los textos de las pancartas, las consignas cantadas por los estudiantes, corridos mexicanos, discursos políticos, noticias periodísticas y poemas. Además, incluye literatura de protesta de otros tiempos históricos en México y Latinoamérica, como fragmentos de textos de la conquista, de José Martí y Juan Rulfo, para mostrar la continuidad del pensamiento en la historia de México y Latinoamérica. Poniatowska fue galardonada en 1971 con el prestigioso Premio Xavier Villarrutia, pero lo rechazó en una carta al Presidente Luis Echeverría, informándole que no lo escribió para ganar elogios, sino para dar voz a los que ya no podían hablar por sí mismos. En 1993 *La noche de Tlatelolco* llegó a su quincuagésimo impresión. Cuando lo publicó, la casa editorial recibió amenazas de bomba y había rumores de que el gobierno lo confiscaría y lo prohibiría (Szanto 22).

Querido Diego, te abraza Quiela (1978) es una novela epistolar de doce cartas que son una recreación ficticia basada muy generalmente en la vida del muralista mexicano, Diego Rivera, y su relación con la pintora rusa, Angelina Beloff, con quien vivió en París por diez años y a quien Rivera abandonó cuando volvió a México en 1921. Es un ejemplo de la combinación de ficción y no ficción en la obra de Poniatowska. Está basada en parte en la biografía de Bertram Wolfe, *The Fabulous Life of Diego Rivera*, que incluye fragmentos de cartas verdaderas de Beloff a Rivera. Poniatowksa usa estos fragmentos y los aumenta con su propia ficción.

Gaby Brimmer (1977) es el resultado de entrevistas que Poniatowska tuvo con Gaby Brimmer, una joven paralítica que tiene parálisis cerebral, además de conversaciones con la madre de Gaby y su nana. También contiene un ensayo de Poniatowska sobre la discapacidad en general.

De noche vienes (1977) es otra colección de cuentos. *Fuerte es el silencio* (1980) es una colección de cuatro crónicas sobre eventos turbulentos más recientes en la historia mexicana, como, por ejemplo, crónicas sobre los marginados, los presos políticos, los desaparecidos y los movimientos populares.

La casa en la tierra (1980), *El último guajalote* (1982) y *Juchitán de las mujeres* (1989) son ensayos fotográficos para los que ella suministró el texto escrito. *Domingo Siete* (1982) es una colección de entrevistas que hizo Poniatowska con los siete candidatos a la presidencia de México en las elecciones de julio de 1982. *¡Ay vida, no me mereces*! (1986) es una obra que rinde homenaje a los autores que han ejercido una influencia en su carerra como Rosario Castellanos, Juan Rulfo, Carlos Fuentes, José Agustín, Parménides García Saldaña y Gustavo Sáinz.

La 'Flor de Lis' (1988) es una novela que es en parte autobiográfica, en parte ficción, que trata la juventud y adolescencia de una niña rica durante los años cuarenta y cincuenta en la Ciudad de México. *Nada, nadie: Las voces del temblor* (1988) es un collage de testimonios sobre el terremoto devastador que asoló la Ciudad de México en 1985. El terremoto impresionó mucho a Poniatowska, y al principio ayudó trabajando en los refugios para las víctimas. Después empezó a escribir artículos sobre la tragedia entrevistando a los que habían sido afectados. *Novedades* dejó de publicarlos, diciendo que eran demasiado deprimentes. Poniatowska sospechó que la causa había sido la presión del gobierno, porque ella había criticado su reacción inepta y lenta a la emergencia (García 1994: 15).

En 1990 publicó *Todo México*, una colección de sus entrevistas. Después de más de diez años de investigación y escritura, publicó *Tinísima* en 1992, una novela en parte biográfica, en parte ficción sobre la vida de la fotógrafa y actriz italiana, Tina Modotti.

En 1994 publicó *Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional*, una colección de documentos y reportajes de agosto, 1994 de la rebelión Zapatista en Chiapas. *Las soldaderas* (1999) es una colección de fotografías de las soldaderas, las mujeres que acompañaban a los ejércitos revolucionarios en la Revolución Mexicana y a veces formaban parte regular de esos ejércitos.

Poniatowska ha recibido numerosos honores durante su vida. Fue una becaria del Centro Mexicano de Escritores (1957-58) y fue galardonada con el Premio Nacional de Periodismo en 1978, la primer mujer en ganar este honor. Ha ganado el prestigioso Premio Mazatlán de Literatura dos veces—en 1970 por su famosa novela testimonial *Hasta no verte Jesús mío* y la segunda vez por su novela biográfica *Tinísima* en 1992. Recibió el Premio Manuel Buendía en 1987 por "méritos relevantes como escritora y periodista". En 1990 fue galardonada con el Premio Coatlicue por ser "La mujer del año", ortogado por Debate

Feminista y Divas. Recibió el Premio Nacional Juchimán en 1993 en ciencias y técnicas de la comunicación, ortogado por la Fundación Juchimán.

Poniatowska ha sido muy activa en la vida intelectual y periodística de su país. Fue la fundadora del periódico *La Jornada* (para el cual todavía trabaja), también en 1976 fue la editora fundadora de F*em.*, una revista feminista, y es también una de las fundadoras de la Editorial Siglo XXI, una casa editorial importante en México. Jugó un papel en la fundación de Cineteca Nacional, una biblioteca cinematográfica nacional. Dentro de su carrera ha colaborado y continúa colaborando en: *Revista Mexicana de Literatura*, *El Espectador*, *Estaciones*, *Ábside*, *Artes de México*, *Revista de la Universidad de México*, *¡Siempre!*, *Mañana*, *La Palabra y el Hombre*, *La Cultura en México*, *Sábado*, *Excélsior*, *Novedades*, *El Día* y *Uno Más Uno*. Ha sido una conferencista visitante en muchas universidades en Norteamérica, Latinoamérica, Europa y Australia.

La obra

Es interesante que, hasta lo que he podido verificar, *Paseo de la Reforma* no ha recibido ninguna crítica académica. Es curioso también que todavía no ha sido traducido al inglés, teniendo en cuenta la inmensa popularidad de Poniatowska y la popularidad de la literatura latinoamericana en general desde el "boom". Es probablemente en parte a causa de su publicación relativamente reciente (1996), y en parte porque no es una de las mejores novelas de Poniatowska. No alcanza la profundidad y creatividad de sus otras obras como *La noche de Tlatelolco*, *Hasta no verte Jesús mío* o *Tinísima*. Poniatowska misma lo admite. En el libro *Me lo dijo Elena Poniatowska*, ella escribe sobre su decepción con *Paseo de la Reforma*:

> Creo que *Paseo de la Reforma* es una novela fallida que no trabajé lo suficiente, que le falta mucho, chafa. La hice por cumplir un compromiso editorial. No pienso regresar a ella porque quiero hacer otra novela (72).

Sin embargo, no se debe criticar demasiado este libro simplemente porque no alcanza los niveles de los otros de Poniatowska. Para mí, uno de los peores libros de Poniatowska es todavía mejor que muchas de las obras más destacadas de otros autores. Como la mayoría de las obras de Poniatowska, *Paseo de la Reforma* nos da una visión del México contemporáneo, con todos su complejos problemas económicos, políticos y sociales. Quizás los toca un poco más superficialmente que en otras obras, pero el libro todavía provoca reflexión en el lector sobre cómo se pueden resolver los problemas en México para crear una mejor sociedad en todos los niveles. Es un libro que da una exposición de los muchos problemas que el México contemporáneo enfrenta, y se lee fácilmente, con un lenguaje a veces poético y sofisticado, y otras veces muy popular y cómico. En fin, es una novela muy amena, que merece ser leída y examinada más detalladamente.

En *Paseo de la Reforma* nos encontramos de nuevo con la situación de las víctimas de la injusticia social en México. Tras años y años de entrevistar, como periodista y novelista, a personas de todas las clases sociales, Poniatowska conoce bien esa realidad. No hay muchas referencias a fechas y eventos específicos en el libro, pero podemos decir que probablemente toma lugar en los años cincuenta y sesenta del siglo veinte. La novela también nos muestra una rica representación de los intelectuales mexicanos de este período, un mundo que también conoce bien Poniatowska porque ella misma es una miembro ilustre de este "círculo pensante" y seguramente conoce personalmente a la mayoría de las personas verdaderas que se mencionan en el libro. *Paseo de la Reforma* tiene mucho "sabor local", mencionando calles, edificios, colonias y restaurantes conocidos, dándonos la impresión que estamos en la Ciudad de México.

En esta obra vemos México a través de los ojos de Ashby Egbert, un hombre que proviene de una de las familias más ricas y poderosas del país. Es interesante que Poniatowska escogiera a un hombre para su personaje principal (casi siempre elige mujeres). Ashby siempre ha tenido una vida muy controlada por sus padres, aprendiendo cómo comportarse como es apropiado para un hijo de "gente bien" hasta que un día, cuando tiene un accidente y es electrocutado mientras sus padres están fuera del país. Entonces, como sus padres no están allí para protestar, la ambulancia lo lleva a un hospital público, "El Obrero", donde llega a conocer a personas de baja clase social, y empieza a cambiar interiormente. Sus experiencias en "El Obrero" lo cambian y Ashby se siente liberado al comenzar a descubrir "el verdadero México". Continúa sintiendo el conflicto entre las reglas de su clase y su descubrimiento del otro México. Eventualmente se casa con una mujer de su clase, pero se siente "sofocado" por sus obligaciones sociales y la monotonía de sus rutinas diarias.

Ashby y su esposa Nora se mezclan con un grupo de intelectuales que se reúnen cada sábado para discutir literatura, arte y política. Una mujer radical y excéntrica, Amaya, entra en el grupo y cambia la vida de Ashby para siempre. De pronto Ashby se enamora de Amaya y se encuentra envuelto en "el movimiento" con ella, acompañándola a protestas de varios tipos—manifestaciones estudiantiles, manifestaciones campesinas reclamando su tierra, protestas contra PEMEX y otras.

Después de un tiempo Ashby se ve forzado a separarse de su esposa y es entonces cuando se da cuenta de la importancia que Nora y sus hijos tenían en su vida. En los últimos tres capítulos (que no forman parte de esta traducción), Ashby sigue su lío amoroso con Amaya, participando en sus aventuras activistas, aunque lamenta su separación de Nora y sus hijos. Amaya usa el dinero de Ashby para seguir una vida de lujo—por ejemplo, ella va a Nueva York para ir de compras a Tiffany's y Sack's Fifth Avenue. Después viajan juntos a París donde gastan aun más y se hospedan en el famoso hotel Georges V. Amaya comienza a ausentarse más y más de la vida de Ashby cuando va de un lugar a otro, participando en varias causas radicales. Ashby entonces empieza a no contar tanto con Amaya y regresa más a su vida anterior, frecuentando los restaurantes y clubes que antes visitaba.

Un día, después de no tener contacto con Amaya por un período de tiempo, Ashby llama a su casa y se entera por la criada que Amaya murió. Ashby investiga su muerte y descubre que murió en una balacera con la policía. Completamente destrozado, Ashby cae en la depresión. Después de la muerte de su amante, Ashby vende todos sus bienes, abandona a su ex-esposa y a sus hijos y cambia su vida privilegiada para vivir una en medio de los pobres. Se reúne con sus amigos del "Obrero", Don Lolo, El Gansito, Carimonstrua y Don Eleazar, e intenta vivir la vida de un pobre. Eso lo alegra, por un período de tiempo. Sin embargo, para su sorpresa esto no resuelve todos sus problemas tampoco, no es la respuesta final para él. Se da cuenta de que la vida que sigue en medio de los pobres es una ficción. El final es un poco ambiguo; parece que regresa a su vida anterior, hablando con sus hijos y posiblemente reconciliándose con Nora y reflexionando sobre todo lo que ha pasado en su vida. Deja sus ambiciones radicales y se consuela en su creencia de que Amaya está en el cielo, protegiéndolo como su ángel de la guarda.

A través del libro, conseguimos una visión de la vida de las élites en México por medio del protagonista, Ashby Egbert, que pertenece a la alta burgesía mexicana. Después de su accidente y su estadía en el "Obrero", Ashby comienza a enfrentar conflictos entre su posición en una familia elitista y el verdadero México que llega a conocer en el hospital.

Uno de los enfoques del libro es este conflicto que siente Ashby entre los deberes a su clase y su sentimiento de vergüenza sobre la pobreza que sufren la mayoría de mexicanos. Este tema del conflicto interior es uno que Poniatowska conoce bien, porque es una situación que le preocupa a ella también. Siempre se ha encontrado en una situación conflictiva como una cronista privilegiada de la vida de los pobres en México.

En la revista *Vuelta* Poniatowska ha descrito los conflictos que sentía al entrevistar a Jesusa, una mujer de baja clase social y económica:

> En las tardes de los miércoles iba yo a ver la Jesusa y en la noche, al llegar a la casa acompañaba a mi mamá a algún cóctel en alguna embajada. Siempre pretendí mantener el equilibrio entre la extremada pobreza que compartía en las tardes, con el lucerío de las recepciones…No se me ocurría sino pensar avergonzada: "¡Ojalá y ella nunca conozca mi casa, nunca sepa cómo vivo yo!" (10)

También, en una entrevista con García Flores, para contestar a la pregunta de por qué optó por escribir sobre una protagonista como Jesusa, la respuesta de Poniatowska fue, "en parte lo hice por evitar lo que soy" (224).

El libro muestra el esnobismo de la clase alta que valora todo lo europeo sobre lo mexicano y que trata a los sirvientes domésticos como si no tuvieran caras ni fueran seres humanos. Este también es un tema tratado a menudo por Poniatowska, por ejemplo, en su novela semi-autobiográfica, *La 'Flor de Lis'*, que es sobre la vida de una niña privilegiada que crece en México. Lo siguiente es un enfrentamiento entre la niña y un sacerdote que trata de mostrarle sus ideas equivocadas:

> —...Pero soy una gente bien, heredé costumbres y objetos que lo demuestran. En mi casa todo tiene pasado...¿Sabe?, mi abuelo decía que los sirvientes lo son porque no pueden ser otra cosa, ¿no?
>
> —¿Por qué no pueden ser otra cosa?
>
> —Porque no tienen capacidades. En general son tontos, cometen siempre las mismas torpezas. Mi abuelo en Francia decía: "Si no fueran tontos no serían sirvientes."
>
> —Entonces, para usted, niña de buena familia, la gente con limitaciones no puede aspirar más que a servir a los demás. ¡Qué muchachita! Con razón se hizo la guillotina.... (145)

De cierta forma, esa inseguridad de su lugar en su clase ha sido importante en la formación de Poniatowska como persona y escritora. En *Me lo dijo Elena Poniatowska*, ella escribe:

> Sin embargo, le debo a esa inseguridad todo lo que soy; todo lo que he hecho ha sido debido a que nunca creí que cumplía con los requisitos que me exigía la sociedad y el mundo al que yo pertenecía (19).

Todo eso nos lleva a preguntarnos: ¿cuál es la mejor posición de la élite mexicana para complacer su conciencia frente a los problemas de los menos favorecidos? ¿Es correr de una manifestación a otra, de una causa radical a otra, sin proveer soluciones que duren, como Amaya? ¿Es abrir la cartera casi hasta la bancarrota, dándole dinero a los que lo necesitan para sus causas revolucionarias, como Ashby? ¿Es vestirse de huehuenche o tejuana, dar pachangas, beber aguas de chía y comer romeritos para sentirse más "mexicano" como Amaya critica de algunos elitistas? ¿Es deshacerse de todo lo que se asocia con la vida elitista y decidirse a seguir una vida de pobreza entre la mayoría de mexicanos como Ashby pretende hacer sin éxito al final? Parece que no hay soluciones perfectas. Una persona, no importa cuán rica, puede hacer todo lo posible, puede dar todo su dinero, puede dar su vida, y no va a cambiar un sistema problemático que ha durado por siglos al grado de mejorar la vida de todos los pobres en el país.

Es un asunto que Poniatowska ha tenido que enfrentar diariamente durante su vida. La respuesta de Poniatowska no ha sido envolverse en manifestaciones políticas y causas radicales como Amaya, y parece que su solución es darles una voz a los marginados, contar, valorar *su* historia. Como dice Chevigny, "the particular force of Poniatowska's work derives from the emptiness she found in her position as a woman of privilege and from her using that position to cultivate a readiness of imagination and spirit; when this readiness met with vivid exposure to the dispossessed, she converted equivocal privilege into real strength" (50).

Otro tema que Poniatowska toca en la novela es la paradoja conocida en Latinoamérica como "Eva versus María". Se trata de la actitud de hombres en Latinoamérica que quieren mujeres "puras"—en otras palabras, la María, una esposa que es sumisiva, buena madre, que mantiene el buen funcionamiento del hogar, etc. En cambio, también quieren mujeres como Eva, mujeres que rompen los moldes, que son diferentes, amantes apasionantes, etc. En esta novela, Amaya representa la Eva y Nora la María. Poco después de su boda, Ashby se cansa de su vida con Nora y desprecia sus cualidades convencionales, que son las de la mayoría de las mujeres burguesas en México. En el extracto siguiente, vemos la actitud de Ashby, frente a las dos mujeres:

> Vencido, Ashby se bañó y se vistió pensando en Amaya. Ella no era convencional. Nora, que pudo salir del molde gracias a la poesía había vuelto a las primeras de cambio. El mundo de Nora era el de los preceptos imbuidos desde la infancia, el de Amaya se extendía bajo un cielo inmenso. Nora esperaba que las órdenes cayeran del cielo y su cielo era el cuadrángulo azul encima de la Sagrada Familia y su casa de la colonia Roma. Era una yegua fina; seguía al pie de la letra las órdenes dictadas, Amaya rompía los moldes, sus zarpazos podían matar, nació audaz, llevaba sobre sus hombros veinte o más años de tomar sus propias decisiones (90-91).

En cambio, cuando Nora pide el divorcio, Ashby debe reconocer que aprecia las cualidades burguesas de Nora—las que antes había despreciado. Al mismo tiempo, aunque no está dispuesto a dejar a Amaya, tampoco quiere perder a Nora:

> Nora era su mujer, su posesión, la madre de sus hijos, la dueña de la casa, su novia, su copiloto, su socia, su compañera útil, prática, eficaz, la garante del buen funcionamiento del hogar, la que aceitaba los engranajes (113).

Como en la mayoría de sus libros, Poniatowska nos presenta a una mujer, Amaya, que rompe los estereotipos preconcebidos de las mujeres mexicanas. Amaya es y no es a la vez una mujer fuerte. Toma sus propias decisiones y rompe los moldes, pero no es constante en su dedicación a sus causas. Su "dedicación" es una dedicación teatral y poco efectiva.

Amaya es un personaje sumamente conflictivo, que a menudo parece un poco ridícula a causa de todas sus excentricidades. Por ejemplo, siempre está corriendo de una causa social a otra, pero realmente no logra mucho. Siempre está recogiendo niños en su casa para "ayudarlos", pero los echa al día siguiente por varias razones. Por ejemplo, toma al niño de una drogadicta, "El Todomenso", pero lo devuelve al día siguiente porque se hizo pipí en su cama tres veces y Amaya lo consideró inconveniente. Además, cuando devuelve al niño, le da sólo 30 pesos a la madre para complacerla. Aunque Amaya y su marido "invisible" son ricos, Amaya siempre intenta usar el dinero de Ashby para sus causas y para llevar una vida de lujo y cuando Ashby se queja, lo acusa de ser tacaño. Usa ropa de París, vestidos de Gucci y joyas caras. Se declara profundamente católica al mismo tiempo que tiene aventuras extramaritales y dice que no cree en el matrimonio. Es un personaje escandaloso que se declara revolucionaria y al lado de los marginados, pero que se mantiene elitista y trata a sus sirvientes muy mal, mientras Ashby parece tratar a los suyos mucho mejor (ama a Restituta, por ejemplo).

Ella representa la pseudorevolucianaria, cuya dedicación está lejos de ser constante, y que revolotea de un conflicto a otro, sin tener un conocimiento muy profundo de lo que es necesario para resolver los problemas de México. Lo que le importa sobre todo es ser reconocida como una mujer radical y única, manipulando a los otros y siendo el foco de atención. Las soluciones que propone no son efectivas y tampoco duran. Poniatowska le da una caracterización muy rica a ella en el libro.

Ashby es un personaje clave en la novela, pero su comportamiento es mucho menos escandaloso que el de Amaya. Se siente sofocado por las restricciones y convenciones de su clase social, pero su accidente le da la posibilidad de ser "liberado" por conocer el otro México. Al comienzo de su relación con Amaya, la sigue de una aventura a otra y está contento de obedecer sus órdenes. Al final, aunque todavía le tiene una devoción casi religiosa por ella, comienza a cuestionarla sobre los conflictos entre sus ideales. Empieza a no depender tanto de Amaya, como se ve en el siguiente fragmento: "También Ashby empezó a hacer su propia vida, puesto que no podía contar de seguro con Amaya" (135). Critica su gusto de gastar el dinero que no es el suyo: "A usted le gusta mucho hacer caravanas con sombrero ajeno—dejó salir Ashby" (128). Al final, parece estar contento con su vida, reconciliando todo lo que le ha pasado.

En cierto sentido, hay un tipo de caricatura en este libro—los personajes son extremos y las representaciones de las clases sociales lo son también. Los ricos beben los mejores vinos y champañas y se visten con ropa de París, de las marcas más exclusivas. Todo lo que tienen en la casa es de plata y demuestran un esnobismo increíble. La representación de la clase pobre es también de extremos—a menudo son muy vulgares y tienen apodos y personalidades extraordinariamente cómicos.

En conclusión, hay que relacionar la experiencia de Ashby con el título de la obra—*Paseo de la Reforma*—el título no sólo se refiere a la avenida espléndida en la Ciudad de México, sino a algo más profundo. Ashby va de paseo y se educa superficialmente sobre los que tienen una vida diferente que la suya, pero realmente no cambia adentro profundamente—es decir, no se reforma permanentemente. Sólo quiere participar en las causas sociales para estar junto a Amaya, su amante, porque no tiene convicciones propias. Cuando Amaya muere, sus intenciones benévolas desaparecen: "Con Amaya se esfumaron los deseos de salvar almas, inclusive la propia." (173). En este sentido, la novela termina de una forma muy pesimista. La novela comienza y termina con Ashby y es una crítica de su clase—la alta burguesía. El final es una decepción para el lector: al comienzo de la novela Ashby parece ser un rayo de esperanza para su clase y para los menos favorecidos. Sin embargo, a pesar de todas sus nuevas experiencias y buenas intenciones, al final es obvio que no va a ser la persona que muestre el camino a lo que es necesario para resolver los complejos problemas de México. En cambio, por lo menos Ashby parece darse cuenta de quién es al final, reconociendo que su idealismo no está enraizado en una conciencia profunda de las injusticias socioeconómicas. Merece mención que Poniatowska no da muchos eventos o fechas reales para colocar esta novela en un año o un par de años específicos. Es como si quisiera mostrar la atemporalidad de los problemas sociales y de la corrupción política en México. En fin, es una novela sobre el estancamiento social y político y el falso y poco efectivo idealismo.

Poniatowska misma es pesimista con respecto al futuro mexicano, como se ve en los comentarios siguientes:

> Creo que somos un país cada vez más violento, más injusto, en el que cada día se ahondan más las diferencias sociales. México es un país jerarquizado en el que una clase social es casi enemiga de la otra.
>
> En México vive una clase pequeña muy privilegiada, una oligarquía que está encima de una masa cada vez más depauperada, sumida en la injusticia social. La pobreza es un problema histórico en México desde la Colonia.

> Es muy difícil pensar que un rico va a poner su riqueza al servicio de los pobres. Eso sucede muy pocas veces. Es mucho más fácil que un pobre llegue quizá a ser rico y se olvide de que alguna vez fue pobre. Porque finalmente nadie nace con una gran fortuna, salvo a los que reciben dinero o bienes por herencia, dinero que casi se puede considerar mal habido puesto que no se obtuvo por trabajo propio.
>
> Considero que México aún no es un país democrático. Vivimos una economía de mercado. El 40% de la población mexicana vive en la extrema pobreza, por lo tanto fuera de competencia. Creo que hay poca libertad de prensa, aunque en los últimos años hemos disfrutado de una relativa libertad. Siento que aún hay censura, que muchas cosas no se pueden decir y también que existe la autocensura que nos inculcaron desde niños (Ascencio 56-57).

Esas palabras se remontan al año 1997. Sería interesante conocer las reacciones de Elena Poniatowska ante la derrota del PRI y el triunfo del presidente Vicente Fox en las elecciones de julio del 2000.

Problemas de traducción

Primero, es importante señalar que para la traducción usamos los nueve primeros capítulos de la segunda edición de *Paseo de la Reforma*, que se publicó en 1997 y no la primera edición de 1996. La segunda versión tiene algunos cambios léxicos con relación a la primera.

Consideraciones generales

Cada traductor literario ve su propio papel de una manera un poco diferente. Para mí lo más importante es participar en un proceso de intercomunicación cultural—es decir, comunicar la "realidad" o la "experiencia" que se encuentra en esta novela mexicana a un público canadiense o norteamericano que no habría podido leerla sin la ayuda de una traducción. En este papel soy una intermediaria entre dos lenguas y dos culturas.

En este proceso de comunicación intercultural, hay varios principios que yo, como traductora, debo siempre tomar en consideración: sobre todo mantenerme lo más fiel posible al contenido, estilo, lenguaje e intenciones del autor (en la medida en que es posible saber cúal era su propósito inicial).

En mi opinión, un buen traductor necesita tomar en cuenta su responsabilidad de ser "fiel" al autor/texto original, mientras debe considerar también las necesidades y expectativas del lector futuro, y tratar de reconciliarlos de la mejor manera posible. A veces es posible traducir una palabra o frase de una manera literal sin producir un texto que suene raro en inglés, y es en este caso que el trabajo del traductor es fácil. Sin embargo, la manera en que se usan en una lengua todos sus componentes gramaticales, tales como sustantivos, adverbios, preposiciones, verbos, adjetivos, etc., varía de una lengua a otra, y es inevitable que sea necesario traducir una obra de una manera que no es totalmente literal, empleando transposiciones y modulaciones, cambiando el orden de palabras y la puntuación para dar al lector un sentido de más fluidez que de "translatorese" y "calques".

En intentar alcanzar la "equivalencia" de un texto al otro (en la medida en que sea posible), uno necesita un buen conocimiento de las dos lenguas y requiere asegurarse del significado y del estilo que, en el caso de *Paseo de la Reforma*, incluye estilos poéticos, vulgares, coloquiales, sofisticados, cómicos, caricaturistas, irónicos y exagerados, y reformularlo de una manera "equivalente" en inglés.

La "equivalencia" es más o menos el concepto de tratar de causar la misma reacción en los lectores del texto traducido que en los que leyeron el texto orginal. Es una meta noble, pero a veces inalcanzable. Esto se debe en parte a la diferencia de situaciones culturales y al grado en que la obra está enraizada en la cultura del país. Obviamente un mexicano va a tener una reacción diferente a la mención de edificios y calles familiares y a problemas políticos, económicos y sociales que lo afectan personalmente, que un canadiense que está lejos y quizás es "ignorante" de esos problemas. Además, a veces la diferencia entre las dos lenguas resulta tan difícil de resolver, tratando de reconciliar todas las consideraciones (estilo, contenido, significado, intención, registro, fluidez, etc.), que inevitablemente la equivalencia *total* no es posible y va a haber una pérdida en la traducción.

Si se elimina una traducción totalmente literal como opción, en términos generales hay dos otras opciones, una de las cuales se llama "foreignism" en inglés. Eso es cuando la traducción se lee con bastante fluidez, pero de vez en cuando hay "huellas" que dan al texto un "sabor extranjero", que señalan al lector que es un texto traducido, y no original. La otra opción es fluidez "total", en que la traducción se lee sin "huellas" de que es un texto traducido—parece al lector como si fuera un texto original en su propia lengua.

Yo creo que entre esas dos alternativas—"foreignism" y fluidez—hay un espacio donde el traductor puede ejercer su creatividad. Sin embargo, debo reconocer que, generalmente hablando, lo que exigen la mayoría de lectores, redactores y críticos es, ante todo, fluidez. Lawrence Venuti, autor del importante estudio *The Translator's Invisibility*, resume el problema de la manera siguiente:

> The dominance of fluency in English-language translation becomes apparent in a sampling of reviews from newspapers and periodicals. On those rare occasions when reviewers address the translation at all, their brief comments usually focus on its style, neglecting such other possible questions as its accuracy, its intended audience, its economic value in the current book market, its relation to literary trends in English, and its place in the translator's career. And over the past fifty years the comments are amazingly consistent in praising fluent discourse while damning deviations from it, even when the most diverse range of foreign texts is considered (2).

En términos económicos, es necesario tomar en cuenta también que las casas editoriales son mayormente motivadas por el dinero y quieren una traducción que atraiga al número más grande posible de lectores en la cultura doméstica. Venuti escribe que es la opinión entre casas editoriales que "publishing a translation can be highly profitable only when it meets expectations that currently prevail in the domestic culture" (1998: 124) y ellas "insist on fluent translations that produce the illusory effect of transparency, of seeming untranslated" (1998: 126).

A pesar de todas las presiones mencionadas arriba para proveer un texto totalmente fluido, personalmente no estoy dispuesta a producir uno a costa de sacrificar otras consideraciones, como exactitud y singularidad, por ejemplo.

La fluidez es la opción que conviene en mi opinión, dejando a veces ciertas huellas de "foreignism", no en términos de una estructura gramatical que no se deja leer en inglés, pero dejando en español la mayoría de nombres propios y algunas palabras que, por razones culturales, no tienen equivalentes exactos en inglés. Para mí eso deja un sabor un poco exótico en la obra, y como describe Venuti, "assimilat[ing] foreign literary texts too forcefully to dominant values at home, eras[es] the sense of foreignness that was likely to have invited translation in the first place" (1998: 5). Sin embargo, uno tiene que tener cuidado con eso, porque como dice Hervey, "as a strategic option, exoticism needs to be carefully handled: there is always a danger that audiences will find the TT's eccentricities more irritating than charming" (23).

Hay una verdadera multitud de políticos, personajes y eventos históricos, escritores, libros y artistas mencionados en la novela, mayormente de México pero a veces de Norteamérica y Europa también. Limité mis notas a las referencias mexicanas porque mi intención era proveer al lector anglófono con detalles políticos, históricos y sociales que probablemente son familiares a un mexicano, pero no a un público norteamericano o inglés con un conocimiento limitado de la historia y la sociedad mexicana. Una de las cosas más importantes para mí como traductora era que el lector adquiriera un conocimiento más profundo de los complejos problemas sociales, económicos y políticos de México, lo que requería de las notas. Es también, en mi opinión, uno de los propósitos más significantes para Poniatowska en sus novelas.

Problemas propios de *Paseo de la Reforma*

La hibridez de la lengua española

El español es una lengua que se habla en muchos países. Es en parte a causa de eso que hay bastante variación en este idioma en los diferentes países hispanohablantes. Esta variación ocurre a todos los niveles—al nivel fonológico, morfológico, sintáctico y léxico (Mar-Molinero 48). El castellano de España se trasladó a América Latina con los conquistadores y colonizadores y desde 1492 cambió y evolucionó inevitablemente. Eso se debe a la influencia de las lenguas indígenas, como, por ejemplo, los aztequismos, y también al deseo de ciertas naciones de formar su propia identidad nacional por medio de distinguirse de las otras naciones hispanohablantes con su español. La medida en que un país latinoamericano ha guardado el castellano "puro" de España depende de varios factores—la cantidad de inmigración contínua de España, los lazos económicos que el país ha mantenido con España y los esfuerzos hechos por el gobierno para elaborar una lengua nacional, o, en vez de eso, valorar el español de España con organizaciones lingüísticas basadas en cierta forma en La Real Academia Española (Mar-Molinero 49).

Esta hibridez presenta un obstáculo para el traductor que cuenta mucho con sus diccionarios "comprensivos", porque la realidad es que ningún diccionario, no importa cuán exhaustivo, puede asegurarse de que ha incluido todas las palabras corrientes con todos los significados distintos en los veintiún países que hablan castellano como lengua oficial. Obviamente el traductor necesita consultar diccionarios especializados y con hispanohablantes nativos, pero esas herramientas no siempre ayudan tampoco.

Traduciendo *Paseo de la Reforma*, las dificultades que encontré no tenían tanto que ver con influencias indígenas en el vocabulario mexicano, sino con palabras que tenían significados en México distintos de los convencionales o que no eran corrientes en el español peninsular o latinoamericano, y por eso, que no se podían encontrar en el diccionario. Cuando los significados que se encuentran en el diccionario parecen obviamente extraños en el contexto de la frase, el traductor tiene la suerte de ser advertido de que necesita hacer más investigación. Una situación tal me ocurrió con la "mona de cemento pvc" en la página 15 (página 45 en la traducción). Los significados dados en el Diccionario Oxford ("old maid", "picture card", "terrible") no tenían ningún sentido en la frase "su 'mona' de cemento PVC ardió como antorcha cuando un colega suyo le aventó encima el cerillo con que prendió un cigarro de mota". Sólo tras consultar a varios mexicanos me enteré que "mona" en México puede significar "rag", lo que no encontré en ninguno de mis diccionarios españoles ni en los que se especializan en el español de México. De ahí pude traducir la frase como: "His PVC glue soaked rag burned like a torch when a buddy of his threw a match he had used to light a joint on top of him".

A veces los significados que se encuentran en el diccionario tienen un sentido perfectamente normal en la frase, y es en ese caso que el traductor necesita siempre mantenerse vigilante asegurándose de que ha elegido el significado correcto. Esa situación me ocurrió con las palabras "cigarro" y "torta", que tienen significados específicos en México, que mi diccionario otra vez no reveló. Un "cigarro" es normalmente un "cigar", y se usa la palabra "cigarillo" para "cigarette". En una frase como la siguiente ambos "cigar" y "cigarette" podrían tener sentido: "Amaya no decía una palabra hasta que al ver que ya no tenía cigarros, aplastó la cajetilla en su mano derecha y …" (80). Algo subconciente, no sé por qué, me advirtió ser cautelosa con la palabra y se lo pregunté a una mexicana. Ella confirmó mis sospechas y me dijo que en México se usa "cigarro" para decir "cigarette", y para decir un "cigar", dicen "un puro".

En cuanto a "torta", normalmente significa "pie" o "cake", y ambas palabras tendrían sentido en la frase siguiente: "Al mismo tiempo que recibía a sus invitados, Amaya…ofreció tortas deliciosas que una muchacha sin delantal repartió sobre una pesadísima charola de plata…" (59). Mi intuición me dirigió a buscar más información con un hispanohablante que me informó que en México se usa la palabra "torta" para describir "sandwiches", una opción que mi diccionario no reveló.

Otra cosa que causa dificultades para un traductor es el uso de sociolectos—una forma de lenguaje que se distingue por ser usada por un cierto sector de la población. En este caso es el uso del lenguaje popular, o el lenguaje de la calle que usa Poniatowksa en muchos de sus textos. En *Paseo de la Reforma* ocurre a lo largo de la novela, sobre todo cuando Ashby está en contacto con sus amigos de baja clase social en el Hospital Obrero. Poniatowska aprendió este lenguaje popular de los sirvientes en su casa cuando era niña y es un lenguaje que le fascina. Al principio estaba verdaderamente perpleja por las expresiones, porque no había aprendido jerga regional en ningunas de mis clases. Afortunadamente los diccionarios ahora empiezan a incluir jerga regional, pero no exhaustivamente. Aprendí muy pronto que tendría que consultar diccionarios especializados. El lenguaje popular en México se llama caló. La palabra caló fue usada originalmente para aludir a la lengua de los gitanos en Europa. Este nombre fue adoptado por México para nombrar su jerga. Originalmente fue usado para describir el lenguaje especializado de los criminales, pero ahora tiene un significado más amplio—simplemente el lenguaje popular, o el de las clases populares.

Uno de los problemas es que hay pocos diccionarios que se especializan en caló—son escasos y difíciles de encontrar. Otro problema es que la jerga de un grupo social siempre cambia. Tan pronto como un diccionario se publica, otras frases surgen. Si uno tiene la suerte de encontrar un diccionario especializado en caló, la palabra o frase es explicada en español, así que el traductor todavía tiene que hacer el trabajo de tratar de encontrar una expresión "equivalente" en inglés, con el registro y estilo apropiado, lo que requiere creatividad y un conocimiento de la jerga o lenguaje vulgar en inglés.

Otro problema posible es la ocurrencia de un idiolecto, el lenguaje particular de una persona. A pesar de todos mis esfuerzos para averiguar el sentido de las palabras "godorromos achafaldranados", no tuve éxito. Varios mexicanos me dijeron que eran palabras inventadas, y sospecho que son un ejemplo del idiolecto de Poniatowska. Mi última esperanza era preguntárselo a Poniatowska, lo que hice, pero todavía no he recibido ninguna respuesta.

Palabras culturalmente específicas

A veces hay palabras que son culturamente específicas que no se traducen fácilmente o que simplemente que no tienen equivalentes exactos en inglés. ¿Qué debería hacer el traductor al confrontar este problema? Hay varias opciones—se puede tomar la palabra directamente de la obra original y esperar que el lector del texto traducido va a entenderla. Eso es lo que hice con los muchos "señores" y "señoras" en este texto. Intenté encontrar palabras que corresponden en inglés para "señora", como "Madame" o "Mrs.", pero a veces suenan raras en el contexto de la frase. Lo mismo con eligir "Sir" o "Mr." para reemplazar "señor".

Por ejemplo, en la frase siguiente sonaría raro reemplazar "señora" con "Mrs." o "Madam":

> —Ay señora, ¿cómo voy a saber si empecé con usted hoy en la mañana? (60)
>
> Traducirlo como:
>
> —Aye Mrs., how am I supposed to know that if I started with you this morning?
>
> O:

—Aye Madam, how am I supposed to know that if I started with you this morning?

Sería raro reemplazar señora en la frase siguiente también:

—De parte de la señora. (115)

—From the Mrs.

O:

—From the madam.

Obviamente ambos suenan raros. Por eso decidí guardar todos los "señores" y "señoras" en el texto. Como los títulos "Herr" y "Frau" en alemán, casi todo el mundo los reconoce y los entiende, y es una oportunidad para dejar un sabor extranjero en el texto que probablemente no va a enojar a la mayoría de lectores.

Para las palabras españolas que no se puede "transplantar", porque el lector probablemente no las va a entender, la decisión es un poco más difícil. Se puede traducir la palabra española a la palabra inglesa más cercana posible, sin una nota de pie de página o con una nota explicando cómo esta palabra inglesa no refleja *exactamente* la misma idea que la palabra original. Otra opción sería dejar la palabra en español, explicando en inglés en una nota o un glosario el significado de la palabra española. Cada opción tiene ciertas ventajas. La primera opción, traducirlo al inglés, da al lector un sentido de fluidez y transparencia, y con una nota explicando más sofisticadamente el significado exacto, el lector puede, si quiere, enterarse mejor sobre cómo esta palabra inglesa pierde algo de la original.

Dejando la palabra en español da un sabor extranjero a la obra, lo que es una posible razón por la cual el lector eligió leer una novela extranjera en vez del último bestseller de John Grisham. Sin embargo, algunos lectores encuentran palabras extranjeras y notas de pie de página irritantes. Es una decisión difícil. Personalmente me gusta leer traducciones con palabras originales en español y que tengan un sabor exótico, pero tengo que recordar que no soy el lector típicamente monolingüe que es el tipo de lector que necesita una traducción en primer lugar.

Para traducir palabras culturalmente específicas, hice diferentes cosas en diferentes situaciones. Si podía encontrar una palabra inglesa que cupiera bien en el texto traducido y más o menos captara el significado original, opté por usar la palabra inglesa más equivalente posible, con una nota de pie de página explicando más detalladamente el significado de la palabra española. Eso es lo que hice con las palabras "pachanga" y "chiquihuite". Usé la palabra genérica "party" por "pachanga", con una nota de pie de página que explicaba que se refiere más específicamente a una fiesta urbana de carácter populachero. Para "chiquihuite" usé la palabra genérica "basket", aunque chiquihuite es una palabra popular que viene de los aztecas y refiere específicamente a un "canasto sin asas, de palma, de ixtle o de tiras de carrizo, que se usa para llevar o guardar alguna cosa, como las tortillas o la fruta" (Diccionario del español usual en México). Traducirlo simplemente como "basket" pierde un poco el carácter único y específico de la palabra "chiquihuite", lo que expliqué en la nota.

Con ciertas palabras no pude encontrar equivalentes ingleses y las dejó en español con una nota explicándolas. Por ejemplo, las palabras "huehuenche", "tehuana", "aguas de chía", "jícamas" y "romeritos". De todas esas palabras, "jícamas" fue la única que encontré en un diccionario bilingüe, con la traducción "edible tubers". No pensé que "edible tubers" sonaba muy apetitoso en el contexto de una receta para un dulce, así que guardé la palabra "jícama" con una nota explicándolo.

Decidí guardar la palabra española "campesino", lo que más o menos ha sido traducido frecuentemente con la palabra "peasant" en inglés. En mi opinión, "peasant" no describe suficientemente lo que es un campesino, y en inglés tiene una fuerte conexión con el sector de la población durante la época del feudalismo. Ya no tenemos "peasants" en el sentido propio en Norteamérica y no creo que esa palabra refleje bien lo que es un campesino mexicano. Además, "campesino" es una palabra que en mi opinión se recuerda fácilmente y no parece muy extraña en el texto. Es también una palabra que se encuentra en textos escritos en inglés de historia sobre Latinoamérica. En fin, decidí dejar la palabra en español con una nota explicando que un campesino es una persona que vive en el campo o un pueblo rural que se dedica a trabajar la tierra.

Ashby llama a Amaya "güerita" mucho en el texto. "Güera", en México significa "a blond woman". "Güerita" es entonces un apodo cariñoso que usa Ashby con Amaya. Es difícil traducirlo al inglés. Las opciones podrían ser "my (little) blond darling", lo que es tres o cuatro palabras para una en el original. Sería demasiado aparatoso. Consideré la palabra "blondie" en inglés, pero en mi opinión es una palabra enojante, chovinista, que me recuerda las muchas bromas sobre las rubias en Norteamérica. Es por eso que decidí dejar la palabra original en el texto traducido, explicando en una nota que es un apodo cariñoso que Ashby usa con Amaya.

En cuanto a las frases dichas por los sirvientes con una pronunciación argótica, las dejé en español también porque no pude encontrar una manera inglesa de distorsionar las palabras como en el original. Entonces, dejé la frase original, "Seño Mayito", con una nota explicando que en el original esta ortografía es para reflejar una pronunciación provincial de parte de la sirviente.

En términos de nombres propios—de personajes, ciudades, figuras literarias, etc., decidí usar la convención usada por la mayoría de traductores—dejar todos los nombres propios en español excepto los que tienen una ortografía mundialmente reconocida. Por ejemplo, guardé la ortografía española para nombres de personajes, como María, y Josefina (no los cambié a Mary y Josephine), pero usé la ortografía mundialmente conocida para países y para ciudades no mexicanas—Mexico en vez de México, Spain en vez de España, London y no Londres.

Fue verdaderamente difícil decidir qué hacer con los muchos apodos en el libro. La mayoría de apodos tienen un significado cómico, irónico o vulgar. Normalmente los nombres no tienen un contenido léxico—por ejemplo Richard y la versión español, Ricardo—si el traductor lo deja como Ricardo, no va a tener un gran impacto en la comprensión del lector. Sin embargo, cuando los nombres tienen significados léxicos, como los apodos, es una situación diferente. El significado de los apodos tiene que ser comunicado al lector de una manera u otra. Los apodos son muy populares en México, probablemente mucho más que en

Canadá. Es difícil saber la intención de la autora cuando asigna a ciertos personajes los apodos. A veces un apodo refleja la actitud de un personaje o una característica física, o se lo usa para mostrar cariño u odio, dependiendo del contexto. Sin embargo, a veces no tiene ninguna explicación—es simplemente un apodo que se ha asignado a una persona por una razón u otra.

Fue difícil decidir dejarlos en español con una nota explicándolos, traducirlos *literalmente* al inglés o tratar de inventar un apodo "equivalente" en inglés. Si uno no los traduce pero los explica con una nota, el lector va a perder un poco la sensación de asombro y diversión que un lector español tiene inmediatamente al leer el nombre ridículo. Traducirlo literalmente es a veces un poco aparatoso en inglés. Por ejemplo, traducir "El Todomenso" como "the completely stupid one" resulta ser un poco pesado. Se vuelve cuatro palabras por dos en el original. Escoger la última opción—tratar de pensar en "equivalentes" en inglés que provocarían la misma reacción es un poco intimidante y subjetivo, porque mis propios juicios juegan un gran papel en la elección. No es siempre posible adivinar la intención de Poniatowska en cuanto a los apodos.

Decidí tratar de traducirlos semi-literalmente si esto no era demasiado complicado y si eso no funcionaba, trataba de pensar en "equivalentes" que más o menos reflejarían lo que yo pensaba que el autor quería. Cuando pensaba en una traducción de los apodos mi intención era siempre tratar de evitar una traducción que sonara muy pesada y extraña en inglés, aunque los apodos siempre suenan un poco raros en cualquier lengua, es por eso que son apodos y no nombres propios.

La palabra "ganso" (de donde viene el apodo "El Gansito" con el sufijo diminutivo) significa varias cosas en español—"goose", "clumsy oaf", "lazy slob" e "idiot". No sé cuál de esas opciones fue el significado intentado por la autora. Puede ser que Poniatowska eligió esta palabra precisamente por su carácter polisémico. No sabemos mucho de este personaje y sus características físicas, así que decidí mantenerme cerca a una traducción literal. Después de considerar varias opciones como "Clutzy" y "Clumsy", opté por enfatizar las asociaciones de "goose". "Little Goose" y "Gosling" no me parecían ser apodos probables en inglés, así que intenté encontrar un apodo que se podía usar en inglés, incorporando lo de pájaro, y "Ducky" vino a la mente. Es un mote muy compacto, cómico y cariñoso y no suena *demasiado* extraño en inglés.

Al intentar traducir el apodo "Don Lolo", me enfoqué en los significados posibles para "lolo", y en mi diccionario de caló me enteré de que es un adjetivo que a veces se usa en México para decir "tonto". Es por eso que al principio decidí traducirlo como "Mr. Stupid", "Mr." para reflejar el "don" en el original, y "stupid", que viene literalmente del "lolo". Sin embargo, al mencionarlo a unos hispanohablantes, me dijeron que ese significado de "lolo" no era muy conocido y que "Lolo" podría ser simplemente la forma masculina de "Lola" o un apodo sin un significado. Puesto que el apodo "Lolo" es muy parecido a su nombre propio "Eulogio", decidí dejarlo simplemente como "Mr. Lolo".

La traducción de Don Eleazar Quintero era fácil—simplemente Mr. Eleazar Quintero. El apodo "La Carimonstrua" probablemente alude a una combinación de cara y monstruo, y de ahí lo traduje literalmente como "monsterface", un apodo que no suena raro en inglés.

La "Pantaleta" era uno de los apodos más difíciles de traducir. Es una palabra popular para decir ropa interior femenina—en otras palabras, lo que llamamos "panty" en inglés. No sabemos mucho de este personaje—sólo que es una drogadicta. Las traducciones literales como "The Panty" o "Pantywoman" sonaban tan raras en inglés que decidí enfocarme más en el aspecto de su drogadicción. De ahí intenté encontrar un apodo popular en Canadá para una drogadicta. Eventualmente decidí usar "Needles".

El nombre del niño Platón es interesante simplemente porque es el nombre "Plato" en inglés, un nombre raro para un niño poco educado de un campesino—fue una decisión fácil traducirlo literalmente como "Plato". En cuanto al apodo del pobre "Todomenso", tras mucho pensamiento decidí traducirlo como "Dummkopf", lo que comunica el "menso" y es un apodo que se usa a menudo en inglés.

Los diminutivos

Otro problema fue planteado por los muchos diminutivos que Poniatowska emplea en el texto—son muy comunes en español y pueden tener varias funciones según el contexto. Pueden servir para distinguir una versión más pequeña o joven del sustantivo (pedazo, pedacito), para dar un sentido de desprecio a una palabra (soldado, soldadito), para rendir una palabra insultante menos insultante (gordo, gordito) y finalmente, para mostrar cariño (Ashby, Ashbito), lo que es el caso con la mayoría de diminutivos en *Paseo de la Reforma*. La dificultad fue decidir cómo traducir los muchos "Ashbitos" y "Amayitas" en la novela. Se podría traducir todos como "Ashby dear/darling" y "Amaya dear/darling", pero en mi opinión eso resulta sonar farsante y condescendiente y no cariñoso. Es por eso que los traduje como "Ashby dear/darling" o "Amaya dear/darling" sólo de vez en cuando y los dejé como Ashby y Amaya la mayoría de veces.

Las palabras extranjeras

Con frecuencia hay palabras y frases francesas, inglesas y latinas en el texto español. Esas palabras y frases tienen una función muy precisa en la narrativa: muestran el aislamiento y el esnobismo de una clase privilegiada que valora lo europeo y lo norteamericano sobre lo mexicano, es decir, todo lo que define el país. También muestran que esta clase tiene los recursos para poder estudiar en varios países y aprender lenguas extranjeras. La presencia en la novela de tantas palabras extranjeras no presenta problemas para el traductor, porque se puede conservarlas sin cambios en cursiva.

Ejemplos de frases problemáticas

Cuando uno enfrenta una situación donde hay una divergencia grande entre los dos idiomas y una traducción literal o casi literal no funciona, el traductor necesita mostrar un poco más de creatividad. Hay varias tácticas posibles a las que un traductor puede recurrir. A veces se puede simplemente cambiar un poco el orden de las palabras o cambiar un verbo por un sustantivo o viceversa. A veces se necesita cambiar el tiempo de un verbo para que suene más inglés. De vez en cuando implica la adición de un verbo, una preposición o un adjetivo. Las frases de Poniatowska a menudo son muy largas, llenas de adjetivos y con una serie de cláusulas separadas por comas, lo que la lengua española sostiene mejor que la inglesa. En los intereses de claridad y fluidez, decidí a menudo cortar una frase larga en dos más cortas. A veces las palabras y estructuras de una frase resultan tan difíciles de traducir al inglés, que se necesita tomar la frase como una unidad de traducción, totalmente cambiándola y reformulándola, tratando de la mejor manera posible de guardar lo importante del contenido y el estilo de la frase original. Abajo hay unos ejemplos de frases así y las soluciones que encontramos.

—¡Niñoooooo, por Dios, niñooooo! (12)

No funciona traducirlo como "Chiiiiiiild, oh my God, chiiiiild! En este caso reflexionamos sobre lo que la frase refleja—el terror de la nana Restituta y su expresión de temor. De ahí decidimos traducirlo como "Oh my God, the child! Oh my God, the child!"

Otra frase muy difícil de traducir es:

> ¡Cuánto abandono, cuánta carne supurando, cuánta piel como papel quemado, cuánta miseria humana! (14)

Tratamos de reformularla lo mejor posible, cambiando el orden de los segmentos, y traduciendo la palabra "cuánto" de diferentes maneras, y la tradujimos como "What incredible neglect and human misery, what a lot of festering flesh and skin burned like paper!"

A veces es necesario añadir unas palabras para hacer la frase más clara en inglés. Eso es lo que hicimos con la frase siguiente:

"Igualito que en Buckingham", dijo Lola Tovar…" (39)

Lo tradujimos como:

"Just like in Buckingham Palace, said Lola Tovar…", lo que suena más natural en inglés con la adición de la palabra "palace".

Lo hicimos con la frase siguiente también:

"…o que los zapatos de José Revueltas fueran de plan quinquenal." (47).

Lo tradujimos como:

> "…or that José Revueltas' shoes looked like they came from a five year plan factory", haciéndolo más claro en inglés.

A veces decidimos no traducir una unidad de contenido léxico porque en nuestra opinión no era necesario a causa de la diferencia de la situación cultural entre México y Norteamérica. Consideremos la frase siguiente:

> "La puerta se la abrió una mujer con la cabeza envuelta en un paliacate rojo al estilo de la negrita Aunt Jemima" (62).

Decidimos no traducir "la negrita" porque "the negress" suena racista ahora en inglés, y "the black woman" resulta ser demasiadas palabras. Decidimos que casi todo el mundo en Norteamérica reconoce la marca "Aunt Jemima" y sabe que es una mujer negra con un paliacate rojo. Entonces, decidimos traducirlo como:

> "A woman with her head wrapped up in a read scarf like Aunt Jemima opened the door."

Para concluir, el último problema de traducción, el título, no nos presentó un gran problema. Dado que el Paseo de la Reforma refiere a un lugar específico en la Ciudad de México que el lector llega a conocer bien a causa de su importancia en la vida de Ashby, decidimos dejar el título como *Paseo de la Reforma*.

La traducción nunca es el proceso automático e impersonal de transferir palabras de una lengua a otra. Es el trabajar con la belleza de ambos idiomas y participar en un proceso de comunicación intercultural. Un traductor puede siempre tratar de alcanzar la perfección en su traducción, pero a menudo tiene que resignarse al hecho de que la perfección no es siempre alcanzable. Esto no implica que la traducción literaria no sea una empresa valiosa, al contrario, nuestro mundo se enriquece cuando más lectores tienen la posibilidad de apreciar, por medio de las traducciones, la variedad de la literatura del mundo entero. Espero haber añadido a esta riqueza con mi traducción de *Paseo de la Reforma*.

1

Here as well, on the top floor of the English Hospital, Ashby was close to heaven. The flashes of lightning he saw through the window were hurting him badly all over again. The same image of what had made him suffer was continually going through the young man's mind, the moment when the electric shock paralyzed him with a pain so fierce that he thought: "I'm a gonner".

Thrown by the very force of the current, Ashby nevertheless managed to get to the bath on the terrace roof, shove Melesio the servant out of his way, and throw himself under the shower head. He fell to his knees. He had no feeling in his arms, but he lifted them, holding them up to the water. The nanny Restituta, the chambermaids, and the caretaker Miguel had all heard the shock in the garden and were watching him from the door, terrified.

—What an awful sight.

—He's going to die.

Smoke was coming from his body, and his skin was a mass of blood and pus. Miguel made the sign of the cross.

—We have to call the Red Cross.

They insisted on taking off his shirt. Ashby helped by taking his arms out of the sleeves, which were still smoking.

The washlady tearfully explained:

—A shirt flew away on me, and, since young Ashby is such a good person, and very athletic, I went to his bedroom to look for him, and asked him to reach for it. He climbed up to the terrace, grabbed a curtain rod, and straightened a hanger to lengthen the rod, but he didn't realize that the power line was there. The current connected with the wire. The young Ashby's arm was struck by the current right before my very eyes.

Restituta was yelling:

—Oh my God, the Child! Oh my God, the Child!

When she saw him there, paralyzed, the elderly Restituta, shrieking in pain, started to ask for help. It broke your heart. When the chambermaids heard her, they came running to the rescue, and with their hands together they called upon the blue sky, the clouds, and all of the saints for help.

—But the parents, they're not here, the parents, they're not here—the nanny kept repeating.

The Red Cross arrived, and Ashby refused to lie down on the stretcher, climbing into the ambulance all on his own. Once seated, he let his long arms hang and threw his head back. When a nurse tried to bend his left arm, a cry of pain filled the white interior of the ambulance.

—Right now we're going to give you a needle to lessen the pain. Even though you may not want to, we need to lie you down in order to give you the injection.

When the paramedic set him down, another cry came forth from his throat, which also felt scorched. Then the second paramedic shut the door of the ambulance. Ashby could no longer see the blue sky that the women had called upon, nor the much loved face of Resti the nanny, whom he heard begging:

—Let me go with him, make a little space for me, don't be mean.

Obviously they didn't do so: he was alone.

The inferno started in the ambulance. They washed his chest and arms with a saline and isodine[1] solution that made him howl like an animal.

—What happened to your legs, young man? The right one looks a bit funny.

—A horse fell on top of me four years ago.

—We can only keep you here tonight. Tomorrow we'll transfer you the Obrero;[2] they treat burn victims there.

—What do you mean by the "Obrero"?

—It's a government hospital.

Ashby thought about how horrified his parents would be when they found out he was in a state hospital, but he no longer had any energy left to protest. What did it matter? He had used up all of his energy in the moments immediately following his electrocution. Now he was in the hands of the doctors and nurses. Let them do whatever they felt like with him. After all, they weren't his servants.

In the Obrero Hospital the first thing they did, after making him wait for a couple of hours, was to take off his bandages and repeat the same treatment as in the ambulance: water and isodine. Ashby could not hold back his tears or his cries. Now his moans intermingled with those of the others, and from his position in "Emergency" he was a witness to cases much worse than his own. What incredible neglect and human misery, what a lot of festering flesh and skin burned like paper! At the limits of human endurance—his own and that of the others—he wasn't aware of exactly when they moved him from the operating theatre to a ten-person room.

An unbearable thirst woke him up. He asked for water. A nurse with a face like a five-star general coldly replied:

—You're not allowed to drink water.

—Can you at least wet my lips?

—Out of the question, a drop might spill in.

—It's just that I can't bear the thirst.

—I don't care, those are the orders from my superiors. It will make you throw up, and then I'll get a reprimand.

The nurse left, and Ashby made a beeline for the jar of water, dragging his catheter along behind him. He drank almost all of it. The relief was instantaneous. Nothing happened. Two days later, when he asked the same nurse if he could sit up because the pain in his back was unbearable, he once again heard a resounding "no". Without further ado, and before her irascible stare, the boy sat down on the edge of the bed. Obviously Ashby wasn't as docile as the other patients, who wouldn't dare to disobey an order. He asked what the white pill was for, what the yellow one was for, what was in the red one, and when the pain made him double over, he did whatever he thought would alleviate it, in accordance with his own very personal diagnosis. He did sleep face up, always in the same position, and he didn't move his legs from which they had taken skin for the grafts.

The contact with the nurses and his roommates brought about a discovery in Ashby. The man in the bed to the left of him, Eulogio Castillo, or "Mr. Lolo", the inn cook who had had a boiler explode in his face, was stoic. With his head entirely bandaged except for two holes for his eyes, one for his nose, and one for his mouth, he would say:

—Thanks be to God and to the Holy Virgin that I didn't lose an eye, a nut or a dick.

The nurse reprimanded him:

—Be quiet, Mr. Lolo, don't be crude.

In the bed to the right was a gas deliveryman in his sixties who spoke like a prophet. He flew through the air during the explosion at Unigas Inc. Mr. Eleazar Quintero was a devotee of Moctezuma,[3] and even reflected on what the emperor used to eat: more than three hundred dishes and fifty big jugs of good cocoa with a lot of froth, served by four women.

—Give me a break, you rotten old man!—a boy that everyone called "Ducky" yelled at him one day. His PVC glue soaked rag burned like a torch when a buddy of his threw a match he had used to light a joint on top of him. The sudden blaze burned his chest and hands.

—Well, wouldn't it have been nice if you had gotten your face fried too, you vulgar boy—murmured Mr. Lolo.

One afternoon shouts were heard in the corridor.

—But how can we let you in lady, just look at yourself!

The alarmed patients saw a ragged creature pushing herself through.

—Make way for the chief! Ducky you rascal, come to me baby!

She anchored herself to the head of the bed. There was no human power capable of moving her from there.

—Out of the question woman, you're repulsive!

—My goodness, what have they done to you chum, just look how they left you. Tell me who it was so I can make them pay.

—Oh calm down Monsterface, you crazy woman, you're scaring the personnel.

"The Monsterface" was the name of that hybrid of "La Tostada", La Guayaba", "La Pintada" and all the heroines of *We the Poor*[4] and *The Underdogs*,[5] and she soon abandoned her initial aggressiveness, sat next to "Ducky", and spoke to him gently.

—All right, all right, you know I'm just your old woman. Tell me what you would like me to bring for you. How are those clowns treating you, my king?

When she said goodbye, she asked the nurses:

—When's the conjugal visit here, ladies?

Ashby was left dazzled by the vision of that couple. Love arose from the most sordid cave and came to beautify the whole unit.

All of Mr. Lolo's family was allowed to come, although they entered one by one, since they were only permitted one visitor per patient. And right away the mother brought an image of the Sacred Heart and hung it on the headboard of the bed, later one of the Child of Atocha, and later a little shelf with candles. Neither the doctors nor the nurses said anything; on the contrary, they crossed themselves before giving Eulogio the bedpan. Mr. Eleazar, a sworn atheist, didn't dare to protest and even asked them to pray for the return of Moctezuma's headdress.

When she saw that his food was getting cold on the table, one of Mr. Lolo's two daughters made an offer to Ashby:

—I come every day to feed my dad. Wouldn't you like me feed you as well?

Genoveva was her name. She told him:

—I work as a maid just a little ways up from here, in Las Lomas.[6]

Ashby started to like the fact that the nurses thought the nanny Restituta was his mother. Resti had lied down like a dog at his feet, or under the bed, night and day, wrapped up in her shawl, but Ashby would send her off at noon. Gradually he started to feel as if his roommates were family. They ate the same things, they were given the same treatments, and they laughed in unison. During the night their breathing blended together, as did their snores, and suddenly even their dreams crossed paths in the middle of that inarticulate murmuring. Ashby, who had been accustomed to knocking at his parents' door since he was a little boy (because his parents considered familiarity to be in bad taste), couldn't get over his shock at the love of these families, who were like affectionate puppies sniffing and licking one another's wounds, lying close to one another, one against the other, searching for each other. He was touched by their innocence. They believed in the doctors as they did in God the Father: a power that men pray to in case of misfortune. "My dear doctor", they begged, kissing his hand. The young interns held back: "Please Señora, don't do that".

From the very beginning Ashby distinguished himself from the others by his non-conformity.

—Why do you want to give me a hair cut? I don't really need one.

He said it with such authority that the hairdresser continued on to the next bed. He left food in his tray, a thing never seen in the Obrero Hospital. A nurse commented to him: "You don't exactly look like you're dying of hunger", and Ashby blushed on account of himself and because of the others. He opted for passing his jelly or rice with milk on to Mr. Lolo, who always had room for a little more. It never occurred to him to ask for a private room, because since the first day the comfort and the boredom united him with the others. He recalled that wonderful saying: "In this miserable world, everyone takes a shit, the priest shits, the Pope shits, and even the most beautiful woman leaves a huge pile of shit". The moods of the others and even their bowel movements were his as well. Their lives came to fascinate him, and when they asked him about his own, he told them, viewing himself from a distance, happy to invent, in three bold strokes, for the first time, a personality for himself that seemed believable to everyone. He told them all about how his job as a stable boy had taken him to numerous equestrian competitions in Europe and the United States with his employer, a show-jumping champion. He gleefully explained what the contests were like. The horses "Classic Touch" and "Montana" would cross the Atlantic in a specially equipped plane, and he would take care of them in the air and would worry when he saw their drooping ears. Who knows, perhaps they were happy when they traveled, remembering that at one time they used to fly like Pegasus.

—What's Pegasus?

—A horse with wings.

—Ah, yes! Like the one on the bottle of car oil.

The winged steeds were on the track, flying over obstacles, their hooves drawn close to their bodies, driven hard by their master and his skilled hand. One time, during a storm, "Montana", spooked by the lightning bolts, neighed and kicked against the fuselage, and it proved to be so difficult to subdue him that the pilot threatened to shoot him. He was finally calmed with an injection. It wasn't good to give injections to competition horses; neither was it a good idea to give injections to superior men like his employer, to put them off course, to go against their nature. The master was a purebred by birth. His ancestors always took care of their bloodline, and one time, when a great-great uncle committed an indiscretion, the Yaqui[7] Indian woman whom he had the temerity to shack up with, renewed the lineage, and their children were born possessing an exceptional beauty.

His employer and "Classic Touch" were the favorites, and together they had won in Luxemburg, Wiesbaden, and Barcelona with zero faults and an unbeatable time. His employer was showered with invitations from every continent to compete, but nothing pleased him as much as accompanying him to India and seeing his clean run in front of the Maharajah, who gave his employer the royal treatment, and gave him, the groom, a palatial bedroom. "What women, my friends, what women, and with what grace they dance and serve you!"

—What on earth is a Maharajah?

Ashby launched into telling a story from *The Thousand and One Nights* that was so fabulous that everyone was hanging on his words. He described the rooms underneath the arches, the water exhibits, the delicacies, and the music, and he surprised himself with the way in which he filled the empty space in the common room. The most beautiful courtesans, covered in gold and veils, with bejeweled navels, were dancing before the Maharajah and putting their hands into the chest of jewels. Nobody in the room was a skinless person anymore, a person skinned alive, a man turned inside out.

—You sure do know how to tell stories, buddy. What's the name of your employer?

—A…A… Adalberto.

—And your name is Ashby?

—Yes, easier, isn't it?

Ashby, all excited about his story, was reconstructing his own life. Seeing himself as another, examining himself, analyzing his lineage, his race, elaborating value judgements about his existence, it all made him enter a new world, a lost land in the ocean that he was just discovering.

At nineteen years of age, the only certainties of this character that was now named "Master Adalberto" were those of his nobility, which equaled that of his horses. He had the same privileges of cast and purity. He couldn't imagine a life without riding. The first thing he asked the doctor was just that: "Will I be able to ride?"

When the young Adalberto achieved the best time in England without a single knock down, thereby placing himself among the three riders without faults in the first round, when the only thing left was a tiebreaker that would decide the winner, he, the groom, saw the scary chain of events in slow motion from the barrier, when "Classic Touch" slipped and fell on top of the rider.

After that the luck of the rich kid changed completely.

—As you guys well know, life throws a lot of curves—Ashby said sententiously. He entertained them with his story.

—Well how nice! Oh how I feel like going out riding even if it was on a dog—Ducky said, and they all had erotic dreams of the odalisques of the Maharajah riding bareback, nude. Ashby was a tonic for the interns because the most intolerable stage after the stinging of the burnt skin is the forming of the scabs. The itching drove you crazy, and many patients had to have their hands and feet tied to the bed. "If you scratch them, it will interfere with the healing process", they said repeatedly. Mr. Eleazar, always so prehispanic, would recall:

—That's the way our emperor Cuauhtémoc[8] suffered on the grill.

Ducky responded, crying:

—Shut up, because if you don't, I'm going to make your fucking mother suffer the same way when I get out of here.

Ashby carried on with his story. They had to shoot "Classic Touch" between the eyes because that's what you do with crippled horses.

—And they couldn't have even given him to me for the Inn's menu—lamented Mr. Lolo.

His employer was in the hospital for a long time. The doctors weren't sure if he would ever walk again, let alone ride. With a heavy heart, he, the groom, returned to Mexico, accompanied by "Montana". Why did this have to happen to his dear employer?

—Oh his poor saintly mother who must have suffered taking care of him—Eulogio commented.

—Yeah right! Like the majority of rich women, she passes her obligations onto others.

—To who?

—To the nanny, the maid, the chauffeur.

—Well what does she do then?

—She plays cards with her friends, attends mass, goes to wakes, expresses her condolences, organizes lunches and dinners, and runs the house.

Ashby saw his parents in a new light. He could judge them against this other family that was listening to him in such rapt attention.

—And your employer, the young Adalberto, why doesn't he come to visit you?

—He's not in Mexico, if he were, he would certainly be here. Anyway, the real reason is that he's egotistical like all rich men, and a little bit of a sissy.

—What's that?

—A sissy? A good-for-nothing, a fop, a spoiled rich kid.

What a revelation it was to criticize himself, to see himself through the eyes of his groom! He had never felt so lucid, so objective. Besides, the reaction of his roommates intrigued him. Deep down Ashby knew that he would overwhelm them with his story, but he came up against a more human way of reacting that was more vital and irreverent than the one he had experienced to that point. His lack of seriousness was pushing him along an unforeseen path.

It was ten days before Richard and Mina Egbert, newly arrived from San Francisco, presented themselves at the Obrero Hospital. The first thing they did was to get him out of there and take him the English Hospital, the ABC, where they operated on him again. The skin grafts from his thighs hadn't taken. The treatment every two days was a descent into hell. When they took off his bandages and washed his skinless flesh with isodine, the pain it caused was more than he could bear. Isolated in an institutional-green hospital suite, Ashby missed the Obrero. He would recall his friends and the nurses, even the oppressive witch who used to angrily ask him: "What do you want?", in contrast with the other unpretentious young nurses who would ask him compassionately: "Does it hurt a lot?", "Would a massage help?".

Ashby's parents didn't realize that by switching him to the English Hospital they were doing him harm. Ashby fell into a depression. He had gone back to being the Egberts' son. It was impossible to get to know the patients in the neighboring rooms with the door closed. The nurses, who were totally impersonal, didn't speak about themselves. Their syrupy smiles were strictly professional. The doctors who entered each morning with their stiff enthusiasm and joviality got on his nerves: "How good you look today, what a healthy looking face!" He thought about the look they would have on their faces if they heard "Ducky" reply:

—Don't mess with me, you bastard.

He missed the neighborly atmosphere of the government hospital. Here he had no reason to go on inventing stories about himself. He was the young Mr. Egbert who had burned himself on the terrace roof by responding to the call of a stupid maid. The days became unbearably long.

His father, a jovial giant who still raised purebred horses on his ranch, "The Sick Rosebush", would brighten his day with his talk of the track, the whip, the horseshoes, the manes in the wind, and the smell of manure. Truth be told, the person he would have liked to know was the groom from his imagination, but he no longer even remembered his name. He realized he belonged to a class of people that doesn't see waiters or taxi drivers or street sellers—in the end they all have the same face, like black people, like the Chinese, like Indians.

After changing the top sheet with one that had the Egbert monogram, his mother laid silly, very expensive magazines with Courrège and Christian Dior models down on his bed: "Look, what do you think of something like that for the Lascuráin wedding?" She complained that nobody was in Mexico City because it was vacation season. "You can't imagine how boring it is! That's why nobody is coming to visit you, everyone left for their ranches". Once she broke a nail: "I have to go to the salon to get it fixed. I can't go around looking like this". His father, with his well-cut suits and his straight talk, was more enjoyable than his mother's frivolousness; nevertheless, the vision of his mother, beautiful and perfumed, entering each day with the question "How did you sleep?", satisfied him, mainly because a fat nurse murmured:

—What an extraordinarily good mother you have!

But neither Richard nor Mina filled the void that Mr. Lolo, Genoveva, Mr. Eleazar, Ducky, Monsterface, and even the irritable nurse had created. When he saw how sad he was the day of his departure, Mr. Lolo had consoled him:

—In the end we too will be discharged from the hospital. Here's my address, Ashby.

Genoveva, with a gentle look in her burnt sugar eyes, gave him her work address in Las Lomas. Ashby pretended to be stupid so that they wouldn't discover that he was the sissy from the Paseo de la Reforma,[9] and told them he would look them up. Inclined to do so, he wondered: When?

2

When he left the hospital, Mexico City seemed strange to him. It was either another country or one that he had never known. Naturally, the first thing he did was climb on a horse. Not on "Montana", but on another, an Arabian that was white and almost transparent like vodka, and who responded to the name of "Wiborowa".

Its smell, sweaty coat and alert ears, the foam on its lips, the reins and the saddle, well broken in by him, molded to the contours of his bottom and hands, it all helped reconcile him with himself again, although when he broke into a gallop he realized that his legs no longer had the same strength as they used to. "Ah my Wiborowa, I'm not your rider anymore!" Nevertheless, he felt much better on his horse than on the ground, his moods in harmony with those of the animal. The horse gave him a stature that his body didn't. Mina herself told him so:

—How well you look!

She would often explain at social gatherings: "My son is a real *casse-cou*. Four years ago he had a terrible fall from a horse and now he has just electrocuted himself". If he had lost stature the first time, the "scorching on the terrace roof", as he often referred to his accident, made him eliminate short sleeved shirts and reduce his choices to other sports: tennis, golf. "Wiborowa" gave him a sense of security that he lost when he entered rooms full of people. He was no longer the strong and tall young man who made heads turn. He struggled with his battered limbs.

His social circle had also changed. After the obligatory pouring out of concern: "How good it is that you survived!" "How lovely it is to see you!", Ashby realized he would never be able to have a conversation with them that would interest him. With condescending kindness they would listen to him speak about Thomas Mann, and a beautiful friend of his mother smiled at him: "Ah, how literate you've gotten on us, my dear young man!", and then, with relief, they went on to the *faits-divers*. They peppered their almost always predictable sentences with French and English words. "I almost had a *nervous breakdown* because of the *surménage*." "*Parlons en français à cause des domestiques*", they cautioned when they touched on the subject of money. Nothing beyond their world was worth thinking about. The preeminence of those families was indisputable: social authority, economic power, and a way with words. Their ideas acquired prestige simply by being theirs, and the forced imposition of Western culture permeated not only their architecture, furniture, and fashion, but each day it also widened the gap that that separated them from the "Indians", those who come like dogs at the call of their master.

Up until the day of his second accident, Ashby had only had eyes for horses. After his electrocution, with his new skin, he could see the Mexicans walking on the street or entrenching themselves in "La Merced"[10] behind their merchandise, and he felt for them the curiosity that his roommates in the Obrero had awoken inside of him. In the market they would offer: "Sample it, Blondie, go ahead, sample it with no obligation", and they would hand him a slice of sweet smelling melon, half an orange, and a quarter of an apple from Zacatlán.[11] Like in the hospital, they allowed themselves the luxury of giving to others what they themselves lacked. The lady peddler offered him just one more peach and that was the end of it. Her shining eyes communicated a story that Ashby would have liked to know. She made the Egbert heir's heart skip a beat. How was it possible that he had never seen them before, if he had spent his entire childhood and adolescence in Mexico?

The difficult part was not speaking about suffering.

—Suffering is universal, Mom.

—Yes, but don't talk about it. Here we don't talk about that sort of thing.

—But *everyone* has suffered.

—Yes, but they don't talk about it.

—Pain isn't unusual Mom, everyone has it.

—Everyone wants to forget it, Ashby, don't insist. Remember your manners, son.

At the receptions Ashby never talked about the pain that he witnessed in the London, Obrero, and English hospitals. And yet his pain had reached a profound level, an acute and temporary pain, because nobody, not even the chronically sick, not even those who die little by little, suffer constantly. There's always a respite. The stabbing pain was opening up his flesh, and Ashby summoned up all his strength so as not to cry out, writhing in agony. Naturally he couldn't say that to his fellow dinner guests.[12] He also resorted to his cultural background, the psychologists, that which custom dictates, his good education, and the self-control that had been instilled in him since he was a child, but nothing helped him more than sharing it with the burn victims from the Obrero. Now a barricade of silver place settings, embroidered linen tablecloths, and Bohemian crystal was rising up between him and his feelings. The young man resigned himself to raising his wineglass and drinking from his goblet without sharing it. It was then that the street started to call him. Or was it the street?

One afternoon he was listening to Mahler's *Titan* in the library, and from the window of his house he was looking melancholically at the sidewalk, when a young man who looked like Ducky passed by. He ran out to catch up with him. He walked two blocks on the Paseo de la Reforma and didn't find him. He stopped in front of the Corcuera's house and only then thought: "And if someone were to see me with Ducky, what would I say?" For Ashby that "someone" was one of the "Three hundred and a few more" that the Duke of Otranto used as dream material for his "Society" column in *Excélsior.*[13] For those "someones", Ashby dressed in tweed overcoats, silk shirts and pajamas with his initials embroidered in blue by some young nuns in Tlalpan, grey flannel pants, and Ortega belts. For those "someones", he went to La Votiva on Sundays, belonged to several clubs, was a member of the group that lives off the returns from their investments, and who receives in their houses the reports of their managers, who watch over the properties inherited from their parents. The "someones" governed his life; saw him sit down at the table; inspected the knot in his tie; watched over his entrance into the ballroom, selected his friendships, his menus, his girlfriends, the brand of his whisky, and his deodorant. Ducky, Monsterface, and everyone from the Obrero had the only possible place: the street, a world infinitely more vast than the one that was trapping him.

From that moment on, Ashby gave in to the lure of the street. Or rather, he recognized a primary instinct, that childhood cry:

—"Street! Street!"

—No child, no, you can't.

—And why can *you*, Resti? Why can everyone else go?

Mina had the answer.

—The street is for the masses.

Resist, he had to resist, like those who go everywhere on foot, those that somehow miraculously managed to stay alive. He was a miracle as well; he was walking among them when everyone had predicted the contrary. The sluggishness with which he lifted one leg and then the other made him like that mass of people for whom life was difficult as well. Their lives centered on a single goal: survival. The street smelled of onion, of fried food, and it was so familiar that the birds would wait for their scraps on the ground as if they were dogs. Bird-dogs, sitting on the sidewalk in the sun. Mina hated smells. "My God, it's intolerable, the whole house smells like cauliflower". Nards were not allowed in the house on the Paseo de la Reforma. "I have a very sensitive nose." His mother would try to identify fragrances. She did not recognize the aroma of sandalwood, or musk. She sniffed the others in order to detect what they were. She was conservative. Vetiver for the men. "No, no, Eau sauvage no, please." Guerlain for the women. Her entire body, deodorized, shaved, extra protected, its imperfections diminished by revitalizing conditioners and moisturizers, Mina had forgotten the evening when Richard Egbert threw her down not far away from the horses' hooves. Neither did she want to remember that every woman yearns for the embrace of a rugged outdoorsman at least once in her life.

Ashby mingled among them, knowing that he was a stranger. His links with tradition weren't the same as those of that multitude into which he was trying to blend. He could break whatever bound him; they couldn't, because that would mean cutting themselves off from their roots. Did *he* have roots? His family's ties with Mexico were almost colonial. Mexico allowed them to live a substantial part of the year in Europe. His parents received their incomes, and the furrows of maize and beans fed them, but they didn't even know how or by whom they were sown. Their fortunes, like their horses, came from their estates and from the work of their grateful peons, a dark mass of scarecrows in blankets.

He was an Egbert, a powerful man. To hold his head high came naturally to him. Now that he was walking around among them, Ashby knew he was capable of insubordination: They moved quietly around with their heads down. Power wasn't their concern, neither was intransigence. Certain adjectives didn't apply to them. One time, in London, in the Lister Hospital right after his fall, Doctor Alvin Whitehead told him about a president of the Republic who asked if he could mingle with the crowd for awhile, surrounded by his bodyguards, of course. Ashby now gave himself that walkabout and then returned, faithful to his lineage, to his house on the Paseo de la Reforma with its attic and its overhangs for the snow, adjacent to the house of the Guichards, who were French.

The long and marvelous avenue of the Paseo de la Reforma culminated in the Chapultepec Castle,[14] which was protected by gigantic trees. It was easy to imagine Maximilian and Charlotte[15] going down the royal path in their carriage to attend mass in the cathedral. Maximilian had the same imperial stature as the Sabines.[16] The roundabouts were a repose within the straight line—that which is round is usually pleasant and welcoming—and, from The Angel[17] up to the Carlos IV[18] roundabout, Richard Ashby invited his son to go jogging, back and forth, breathing in deeply the good air under the most transparent sky in America.

Ashby loved to walk over the loose earth on the grand avenue after it had been trodden by horses' hooves. He had a chance to see them when he was a boy, male and female riders under the immense ahuehuete trees.[19] It was also a catwalk where people would dress up elegantly in the latest models of boots, riding jackets, and even whips. The Amores, the De Limas, the Burns, the Escandones, the Corcueras, the Limantoures, and the Souzas lived in houses with gardens, vestibules, and a service door for the servants and the suppliers with their baskets of radishes, cabbages, and lettuce. They would leave by the south sidewalk and return by the north sidewalk, whose guards, like statues cast in bronze, were doing the night shift. His father elegantly pointed with his *walking stick* to Ignacio López Rayón,[20] who helped Morelos,[21] now on his pedestal, his profile gazing up towards eternity. Ashby was fascinated by Hermenegildo Galeana,[22] who fought in the South in favor of the War of Independence,[23] and Guadalupe Victoria,[24] the name that Félix Fernández gave himself to pay homage to the Virgin of Guadalupe[25] to obtain the victory. Francisco Zarco,[26] the journalist and minister under Juárez,[27] and Ignacio Ramírez,[28] "The Necromancer", were his favorites because they were writers, and although Richard Egbert jogged faster in front of Fray Servando Teresa de Mier,[29] close to the University Club, Ashby liked to slowly examine the smooth pleats of his cassock. "Just by walking on the Paseo de la Reforma you learn about Mexico's history"—Egbert Senior would say to him and would lead the way—: Inhale, exhale, in, out, in, out, don't fall behind, don't get distracted, straighten up your back, mind your shoulders, here is Andrés Quintana Roo,[30] don't look at him…don't salute Miguel Lerdo de Tejada[31] either… Juan Zuazua,[32] Ignacio Pesqueira,[33] vile nobodies…take off your hat in the presence of Doctor Rafael Lucio,[34] he brought us vaccinations". The statue he always condemned was Lerdo de Tejada's, hero and martyr in the War of Reform,[35] "that little general who took the church's property away". Neither was Ponciano Arriaga,[36] Father of the Laws of Reform, a saint of his devotion. "One, two, one, two, Ashby, look ahead of yourself, don't look at your feet, you're losing your gracefulness, one, two, one, two, salute this one with me: How are you this morning General?", he bowed before Donato Guerra.[37] Ashby would treasure those moments with his father for the rest of his life.

On Sundays, the day of mass, a throng of respectable families gathered at the exit of La Votiva. The women, at first wearing hats and later mantillas, would hug each other and many heads of the family would leave to go and have a drink at the Ritz, before the big lunch that they would share with children and grandchildren at a Sunday gathering.

In spite of his two accidents, Ashby continued to be the most eligible bachelor, and the debutantes pursued him relentlessly. The fresh young girls were easy for the picking, all with long white necks, with three strings of pearls around them, like the ones the Queen of England wears. In the Bellas Artes,[38] while they were listening to *The Magic Flute*, Ashby would introduce his pinky into the tiny glove of his female companion of the moment, and caress her offered hand. To let it slide along their palm was a form of possessing them. They feigned weakness, they pretended not to notice. They remained on the edge of the cliff. They would put their fresh and passionate cheek very near to his lips, ready for his kiss. He would nibble on their ear, kiss them, and bury his nose in the hair at the nape of their neck. He would dance, but only very little, and just one song would leave them smitten, because he would hold them very tightly and his body remained impressed into theirs. He dared to do things that others would never have imagined doing. They would pass on the information: "Ashby dances very tightly because of his accident. Don't you see that the accident left him with a slightly crippled leg?" In actual fact they would fall in love during the first song. With his awesome automobile, his really awesome house in Acapulco, and his totally totally awesome last Caribbean cruise, he was different than the other beaux who insisted on their prowess in sports. Illness had snapped him out of his self-absorption, and in his gaze there was a hunger to meet new people. He transformed his female companion of the moment into a privileged being. He would make them discover facets of themselves that they had not known until that moment. He gave them strength; the truth, for Ashby, was that he believed that women were the only source of harmony. From observing his roommates and relatives so much in the hospital room, he had learned how to read other people, to decipher them. For any of those present at the dance, the encounter with Ashby could be the experience of a lifetime. No one had spoken to them like that before, not even their confessor.

Nora, the one with the longest neck, yearned for him to take her out dancing again, if not for the waltz, then at least for the fox trot, and Ashby did so because Nora's aunt, the Marquess of Mohernando, let him know in confidence:

—It's a secret, but you like literature—I'm telling you confidentially that Nora writes poetry.

—Why don't you show me what you write?—he said squeezing her hand more.

—I've never showed it to any young man.

—I'll come to your house on Tuesday at teatime.

"You're a new Emily Dickinson." He did not expect it. Nora's poetry seemed exquisite to him from the first reading, and he invited her to a lecture by Carlos Pellicer[39], who dazzled her with his magisterial voice and his emotion, when he said out loud:

—Close that door/because it doesn't let me be alone with your kisses.

The meetings become more and more frequent, Ashby fell in love, and when she told him "yes", he was thankful with humility and melancholy. He was staring into a mirror that he had never searched for, and he did not know what image it would reflect.

3

Ashby and Nora's wedding was celebrated in La Profesa,[40] with the family's blessing, although Mina, with a contemptuous look, commented to her son that Nora was neither the prettiest nor the richest of the available heiresses.

—Don't say I didn't warn you, but the Béistegui girl would have been better for you.

The Escandones chose the Cathedral, but Ashby asked Nora to convince her parents that the Regina was more beautiful. The tulle train with the bride's family lace covered ten meters of the aisle, and the diamond tiara on Nora's tiny head brought their wedding to the level of the English Court. "Just like in Buckingham Palace", said Lola Tovar, and the three hundred give or take a few agreed. The presents seemed to come from Ali Baba's cave itself. The Mexican aristocracy wanted to distinguish themselves in every way, and was much more splendid than the European aristocracy. Some of the white boxes with bows the size of cauliflowers were reminiscent of those in the story *The Thousand and One Nights*. Besides, they were displayed in a hall with their cards, and the best families competed with one another without realizing that such exhibitionism would have been censured in the courts of Europe. Had they discovered that, they would have been taken completely by surprise. Neither were they aware of the cracks in their immaculate facade: The first was letting social climbing politicians and vulgar business owners into their circle; the second was letting their daughters be put on display in the pages of the "Society" columns of *Excélsior*, *Novedades*,[41] and *El Universal*[42] like products for sale in a store window.

Ashby and Nora settled in a *hôtel particulier* with towers and balustrades in the prestigious Roma neighborhood.[43] Right away Nora dedicated herself to setting the table with silver dishes, silver cutlery, silver framed mirrors, candlesticks, candelabras, ashtrays, and big boxes for Ortega cigars, silver ones, it goes without saying. Everything to be served on a silver tray until Ashby protested when he saw that his belts as well had silver buckles with his initials engraved on them. He had used them all his life, but after meeting up with Mr. Lolo, he had them replaced with ordinary belts. Nora, without asking him, made them a part of his wardrobe again.

Soon Nora too seemed like silver to Ashby. She was so eager to organize, make inventories, collect Château d'Yquem to accompany the desserts, and arrange bottles of Romanée Conti for the major engagements, that the days went by between calls to the Palacio de Hierro,[44] the Azar, and the Globo—the only place where, according to her, you could buy bread—and the visits to her mother's house at tea-time.

—Do you think that it would be possible to obtain a dozen bottles of Vouvray du Clos Baudoin for some *soles meunières* that I had frozen?

—I don't have the slightest idea—responded Ashby with a sigh. I don't know how those wines travel after leaving the banks of the Loire.

Nora wrote a precious thank-you card for every little coffee spoon given to them on their wedding day, and let Ashby know that they would have to respond to invitations and offer lunches and dinners for no more than eight guests, "for otherwise, we can't chat", and that she had a list of seventy people. Ashby raised his eyes to the sky and recited Pellicer out loud:

> I used to be a big tropical tree.
> In my head I had birds;
> on my legs, a jaguar.
> Next to me the night was plotting
> the conspiracy of solitude.

Nora's poetry disappeared very quickly under the burden of social responsibilities, and with that loss, Ashby's interest in his wife also faded away. Everything was monotonous at the lunches and dinners, nobody took any risks, nobody surprised him, and Ashby began to feel himself wasting away. Not even the birth of his first son took him out of the boredom that had overcome him.

Unlike Nora, who sank more and more into daily life, trapped by motherhood and social obligations, Ashby, trying to get out of the spasm brought on by his lengthy hospitalization, was led to explore other cavities in his heart, other hemispheres of his brain. If we human beings use just a minimal percentage of our brains, Ashby was forcing his to enter unknown territory, and he shut himself away in his library to read and come to some conclusions. Inside there he strove to write. Even the prose discoveries he stumbled upon didn't satisfy him; according to him, he wasn't achieving his goal: writing three lines that might be worth the trouble, in spite of his need to shout his thoughts. The insecurity was asphyxiating him. He tore up pages and the *valet de chambre* threw away baskets upon baskets of scribbled-on paper. Nora thought it was very nice to have her husband at home and didn't concern herself with his state of mind. Neither did he try to involve her.

A woman with child lives in her own little world. Ashby let Nora, the ant of the fable, fall from his heart. Her black loose hair that used to make him think of her naked, lost its shine. One afternoon, when Ashby asked her if she would consider taking up poetry again, she responded, pursing her lips:

—Now I feel more like painting.

—And why not embroidering?—exclaimed Ashby sarcastically.

—Yes, I'd also like to do that.

—Nora, how can you compare a tablecloth with a poem?

Nora didn't respond. The look in her eyes had gotten heavy, those eyes that now resembled her full breasts; the iris, once sparkling, had the same slightly obscene dark color as her nipples.

One time he thought that he would like to see her walking in Kensington Gardens, take her to the Louvre, and observe how she reacted to certain paintings, but now she was no longer interested, and since the birth of the child, Nora no longer asked him: "When are we going to go abroad?" For Ashby, the child was just one more chore that his wife had taken on. When he saw the newborn, he thought: "He looks like a bruised tomato", and he only leaned over the cradle when Nora urged him: "Look at your son". One time he heard her explaining to the Marchioness of Mohernando: "Babies don't interest Ashby…" *Nora* was the one who had given birth. He was still struggling to discover the potential he had within himself. Nevertheless, thinking it would please her, the first thing that occurred to him in the days following the birth was to buy the "heir" a *pony*, which the reporters of "Society" talked about, celebrating the happy arrival of the long-beaked bird with its blue bundle brought from Paris:

—But, what were you thinking? He's not going to be able to ride it until five years from now.

Ashby brought it back to its stable.

—Aye, no, Resti, not you, you'll let him fall.

Restituta the nanny had also been left on the sidelines. She tried to do with Ashby's son what she had done with him when he was little, "but you're not as young as you used to be, Resti, understand, don't be stubborn", Mina said to her, backing up her daughter-in-law.

—I'm no good for nothing anymore, child, was the last thing Ashby heard her say.

One morning, without warning, she was found dead in her servant's quarters. Only one person cried for her: Ashby.

Within a year his second son was born. Childbirth was an act so reserved for women that once again Ashby didn't participate at all. His mother-in-law arrived at the hospital with lace sheets and pillowcases to prepare the bed so that visitors could be received, and immediately the room was filled with enormous bouquets of roses and white presents with blue bows, and Ashby thought about the number of thank you cards that his wife would write with her precious Palmer handwriting as soon as she returned home. The child, another tomato. Nora, in her morning gown made of blond lace from Holland, was thanking them. She had taken to reducing her vocabulary to a minimum. She would take out a little matinée coat from its wrapping and say: "It's divine". Her son was divine, the day divine, her health divine, and her big house divine. The smile with which she said so, was also divine. "You look divine", exclaimed the friends around the fluffy bed of piqué and divinely embroidered strips.

There was no crack that Ashby could squeeze through. Poetry, an undiscovered world, disappeared for Nora, and birds no longer came forth from her mouth. The open space and the large sunny plaza were at the mercy of an avalanche of baby bottles, rattles, quilts, bibs, diapers, and pediatricians, as well as equally unattractive words, like gynecology, obstetrics, forceps and contractions. He recalled what Mr. Lolo's cheerful wife had said to him one time in the Obrero Goyita Hospital:

—When you get married, my dear, everything that happens to you from the waist down is disgusting.

Now *she* was an aristocrat, he thought.

"I need to get out of the house and look for somebody I can really talk to", Ashby said to himself as he went off in the direction of the University. Whereas Nora always had her accounting ledgers with her, he had notebooks of his own, his books underlined with pencil, the comments in the margin, written in a hurry, inspired by emotion. José Gaos[45] was giving lectures in the marvelous Edificio de Mascarones.[46] The philosopher had arrived from Spain because of the Civil War. He projected his voice from the front of a room, bursting at the seams with young people, who were barely breathing, so as not to miss a single word. Ashby was amazed. Gaos' stature extended to his listeners. They grew as they listened to him. José Gaos was a tall, bald, and stooped man, who looked over his glasses from behind the desk. He didn't make grand gestures or stand up, except one time, when he let himself get carried away by the topic, and his voice grew louder in proportion to his strides across the platform.

In Mascarones, Ashby discovered not only Gaos, but Juan David García Bacca,[47] the priest José María Gallegos Rocafull,[48] and the Catalan Eduardo Nicol.[49] One day he would debate with them, would be at their level. It was only a question of preparing himself to speak better, think better, and then, to breathe their air.

The Spanish were involved in everything. They founded schools, athenaeums, and publishing houses. They wrote in the newspapers, inaugurated cultural supplements, and published their memoirs and poetry. Ashby loved to accompany them to the Café Paris and look at León Felipe's[50] head for hours and hours, his beautiful hand stroking his beard while he talked. Juan Rejano,[51] the most accessible of all of them, suggested to Ashby, upon hearing him quoting Martín Luis Guzmán:[52]

—Why don't you write a review about *The Leader's Shadow*? Not only will I publish it, but I'll pay you for it.

Ashby, excited, took it to *El Nacional*[53] the following Monday:

—It's fantastic. Congratulations. Your analysis is truly philosophical.— The editor's enthusiasm was genuine—. He who writes reveals himself. And here I'm the one who discovered you. Please, bring me something for the next issue.

Nobody had given him the kind of gift Juan Rejano had. He had given him a new lease on life. Angels and demons would emerge from his commentary. He had waited for that day for years. Being accepted because of his writing changed his view of other people. He had underestimated them; now they would be his future readers, supporters, and advisors. Elated, Ashby started to invite his new friends over to his house, timidly at first. His rapture was so great that he didn't realize the effect his mansion had on the guests, the enormous library with its bound volumes and velvet sofas, the dining room, which was as enormous as a skating rink, and the museum-like rooms.

Nora was always delighted to see them, and it surprised her husband that everyone surrounded her, captivated by her grace. Pellicer called her a "delightful creature". Nora welcomed them with the same affable and affectionate attitude with which she received their "respectable guests", and didn't seem to notice the lack of ties, and Juan de la Cabada's[54] closely cropped hair, or that the Coronel brothers[55] took off their suit jackets in the middle of the meal, or that José Revueltas'[56] shoes looked like they came from a five year plan factory. The recently arrived guests would sing her praises, whereas they would debate with Ashby, paying him a homage he would never have expected. The first one to bring up the discussion of the origin of the great Mexican fortunes was Jorge Portilla,[57] who, at three o'clock in the morning sang sweetly, while looking into Nora's eyes: "I am a poor little deer that lives in the mountain range…"

—Well now, Egbert, where does your palace come from?

Standing up in his library, Ashby explained to them the origin of his fortune as if he was talking about *La croisade des enfants*, by Marcel Schwob:

—It turns out that, in the forests of Mexico, the peasants would make an incision in the trees, and from that cut oozed a resin that fell into an aluminum can. My grandfather, who was an ace at business, accumulated a great fortune. My father liked the countryside, and in association with Canadian and North American businessmen he acquired some land and horses. Thanks to that I could be educated in London, take courses in the London School of Economics, and, after an accident, a fall from a horse at nineteen years of age, read everything that fell into my hands. That's why I'm so excited to be among you.

Manuel Rodríguez Lozano,[58] distrustful, convinced him that Mexico's fiscal policy grossly benefited the groups in power. They escaped taxes and bought public officials; bribery, pay-offs, they were daily practices of the government since the famous phrase of Álvaro Obregón:[59] "Nobody can resist a fifty thousand peso bribe".

—You're speaking out of bitterness at your months of imprisonment —said Alí Chumacero[60]—. There are many clean men in Mexico.

—No, no. The easiest thing for the government is to buy whomever they find in their path. Look at the young Salvador Novo,[61] official reporter for the six-year presidential terms—not only does he ingratiate himself with those bald army grunts, but with the entire cabinet as well.

—Yes, but look how he writes. His prose is so extraordinary that he should be forgiven, even for being a fag.

—All that I can tell you is that those who brought about the Revolution are now looting the country.

Manuel Calvillo,[62] secretary and confidant of Alfonso Reyes,[63] would appease the inflamed tempers. Henrique González Casanova[64] changed the topic to the University City[65] that had just opened in the South, and was "a light at the end of the tunnel".

From one Saturday to the next, the meetings in Ashby's house became a custom. All throughout the night their guests knocked on the door: Juan Soriano,[66] the painter who had done a portrait of María Asúnsolo; Diego de Mesa, Joaquín Díez Canedo y Aurora, Paco Giner de los Ríos[67] and his wife, Octavio Barreda[68] and Carmen Marín,[69] who was almost as extraordinarily beautiful as her sister Lupe; Manuel Cabrera and María Ramona Rey, Rosario Castellanos,[70] the brothers Gutierre[71] and Carletto[72] Tibón, whose eyes filled with tears whenever they spoke of their intimate love of Mexico's customs and fiestas; Alberto Gironella[73] and Bambi, Max Aub[74] and Pegua, who invited them over for paella the next day in their apartment in Euclides, and a young boy with a mouse face, José Luis Cuevas, who, notebook in hand, took notes upon notes that he wouldn't show to anybody. "They are hideous, like you guys", he said, pointing to the audience.

Given that they were not punctual, and that they always brought friends, Nora opted for a buffet at twelve o'clock in the night. In the meantime whisky and gin and vodka-tonics made the rounds. Whenever someone was absent, they became target practice for the others.

—Instead of dedicating himself to politics, José Revueltas should get a job, that's why he hasn't lived up to his full potential.

—Being communist isn't his problem; he could write in jail.

—Who has told you that it is so easy to write in jail?

Questions like—Who are we Mexicans? and What is Mexico? made the discussion revolve around *The Profile of Man and Culture in Mexico*, by Samuel Ramos.[75] The thin and modest philosopher had been put on the government's surveillance list because of that book.

—I hope they don't do the same to Octavio Paz[76] and his *Labyrinth of Solitude*.

The Mexican Revolution also excited them. Max Aub was enthralled by *El resplandor*, by Mauricio Magdaleno.[77] The intellectuals reflected for hours on the Generation of 27[78] and the Generation of the Athenaeum,[79] the harm that positivism did not only to Mexico, but to Latin America. The Mexican Revolution and the Spanish Republic embraced each other, catching on fire in the Egbert's house until one night Salvador Elizondo[80] shouted:

—Enough, enough, enough!

Enough already, please, all that was pure and simple rhetoric, he wanted to say something sublime, something that would never pass through the puny brain of any of those present, something intelligent about *Le cimtière marin*, by Valéry.

That night of the shout, when passions exploded, Ashby's two sons peeked out, frightened, and when Nora pointed upward to the two little faces between the banisters of the imposing staircase, the guests lowered their tones and proposed that the children be brought into the group.

—Have a whisky, little angels of God, cherubins of Santa María Tonantzintla, celestial messengers from Eden—Jorge Portilla proposed, raising his wine glass.

The children ran up to their private heaven.

The Saturday dinners became increasingly better attended, and Ashby was delighted that he and Nora were growing in popularity among the men and women who were most significant to him, the country's thinking circle. Besides that, he felt reconciled with Nora, because of her good will, for when it was five o'clock in the morning she was still on her feet, offering whiskeys with the same affability. A rooster was crowing in some house in the Roma neighborhood and it made them laugh. "Behold the civilization of the capital city." Sol Arguedas then stood up: "Rubín de la Borbolla, let's go, didn't you hear the cockadoodledoo?" Nora would offer: "Wait for breakfast", and everyone would praise her. The fact that his friends fell in love with her flattered Ashby. They often would get together on Sunday to discuss what had happened the previous night. The Saturdays at Ashby and Nora's were more than a weekly party—they elevated them to the pinnacle of culture in Mexico.

Ashby passed from one elite to another. All elites end up being cruel, and Ashby listened, shocked at the way they practiced wickedness as if it were a fine art. Under the effects of their fifth glass of wine, the poison loosened their tongues, and there was no possible remorse. Ashby could compete with the ingeniousness of the best of them. The words that he didn't find in Spanish he would say in English, French, German; his quotes were precise, his power of seduction was flawless. He discovered that seduction was his natural weapon, and that he didn't need to use it with the "good Mexican girls" because they fell at his feet from the mere sight of him. Here, however, in this circle, he needed to be more than himself, more than his privileged appearance, his innate elegance: one had to know how to ride these centaurs because if not, they would squash him in a ruthless confusion of hooves like "Classic Touch" hadn't achieved in the equine competition of April, 1945.

Nora stayed in the background. Motherhood had molded her into a truly beautiful woman. She meekly accepted the changes in Ashby, but they only doubled her obligations. She continued to have tea with her mother and attend the frequent wakes. My goodness, how people die in Mexico! And what a lot of bridal showers! The chauffeur took the children to their gymnastics, swimming, French, and fencing classes (Ashby personally took care of the horseback riding classes), but she had to supervise schedules and always was sure to tuck in their two little ones at night. When she laid her head down on the pillow on the big Tudor bed, Nora only managed to read three or four pages of *The Turn of the Screw* and she fell asleep, exhausted. Proust languished in the bookcase. In contrast, her husband's library, more and more packed everyday—with piles of books on the floor and on the chairs, was taking over the house, because on top of the ones he had bought, editors would send him entire collections, and authors gave him gifts of their works with flattering dedications.

One Saturday, Don Alfonso Reyes gave Ashby the definitive consecration when he presented himself at his house with his wife Manuelita. On another occasion, José Vasconcelos[81] attended, but he didn't fit in well. Now there was a lot of talk of the return of the poet Octavio Paz and his wife Elena Garro[82] from Paris, and the younger ones, above all, Carlos Fuentes,[83] yearned for their return.

Mexico, the country of open arms, after welcoming the Spanish exiles, received distinguished Chileans, Argentineans, and Uruguayans. They arrived, carrying the burden of their exile, and found comfort in the welcoming house of the Egberts.

One evening, already past midnight, Amaya Chacel made her entrance with five of them. She immediately attracted the host who received them at the door. Two hours were enough for the different groups to come around to listen to her in a corner of the room where she spoke in a thin whisper of a voice. She wasn't pretty like Nora; this woman was something else. Something in her dazzled. When she was listening in silence, looking with penetrating eyes at the person who was speaking, everyone was looking at her, expectantly. What was Amaya going to say? She listened, motionless, exceptionally attentive. She was very cat-like in her silent concentration before delivering her blow, all of her lying in wait, all of her cruelty. Around her the mice, insects, and hypnotized wall lizards were waiting for the fatal blow. Amaya spoke very skillfully, elegantly, in a very low voice, compelling them to be quiet and prick up their ears so as not to miss a single word. "What are you plotting about?", Ashby asked when he got near them, but Amaya didn't invite him to join them.

Ashby was surprised to find himself waiting for her anxiously the following Saturday. When he had lost all hope, the doorbell rang at ten past one in the morning. This time four Chileans accompanied her, two writers, and two painters. Amaya was dressed in white, her blond hair hanging loose over her shoulders, her eyes seemed like obsidian to him.

—They're just like Emiliano Zapata's[84]—Ashby said to her.

—Oh, really? That's great, I'm delighted to hear it!—she smiled at him for the first time.

Ashby saw that her teeth were lovely. He hadn't noticed it.

That night the small groups broke up and little by little surrounded Amàya. Each one was trying to find the spot closest to her. The women had no other choice but to follow their magnetized husbands. Amaya created a threatening spiritual climate. One never knew just when she would attack one of her devotees.

—Literature consists of words, not concepts. That's what interests me. It's much more ruthless to call a president "grotesque, Ortiz Rubio,[85] grotesque", than to give a long, opinionated speech.

She would rant and rave against the elevated sentiments that tried to make Mexico a nation of the New World: "Haven't they realized that Mexicans have nothing to eat? Haven't they realized that there are millions of Mexicans who can't read? Petroleum? Please, petroleum is the only card that a corrupt government plays! At that point her stare became ruthless. Jorge Portilla pointed out to her that many presidents from Bolivia, Panama, and Mexico had studied in great North American universities, in the Ivy League schools, and this infuriated her. "That's why they don't know what civil rights are. Mexico's great shame is its civil rights." At two o'clock, Nora proposed that they go on to eat. Nobody paid her any attention. At last, at three in the morning, it was Ashby who asked: "Well, don't you think that we should eat something?" The black look that Amaya shot at him made him realize that he should never have suggested it, but the order had already been given, and a few of them got up. Not Amaya. Seated on the floor, she continued talking to a few bewitched guests. She coldly dismissed Ashby. On the other hand, she quickly said to Nora in a low voice:

—You are a Botticelli.

Ashby had never thought that his wife could be a Botticelli. With her black hair arranged in a bun with a few ringlets coming out of it, her very slender white neck, and her shy eyes, Nora, rosy because of the rush of the party, had the grace of the Italian renaissance painters.

Ashby began to live from Saturday to Saturday. He never knew if Amaya would show up, and that put him in an extremely nervous state that was difficult to control. In her absence, the Saturdays became gray, and they lost all their attractiveness, at least for Ashby, who would go from one guest to another, from one lifeless thought to another, from one dull conversation to another, on the verge of dying of boredom. In contrast, with her, everything sped up, although Amaya could hardly bring herself to shake his hand. Accompanied by an admiring entourage, she made sensational entrances. Her husband shined because of his absence, although his name would appear frequently in the financial sections of *Excélsior* and *El Universal*. Amaya would mention him: "Alfonso and I..." "Alfonso said..." but she went on without stopping, and one time, when Ashby interrupted her to ask her why Alfonso didn't come, Amaya not only left the question hanging, but didn't talk to him for the rest of the night.

Sometimes, Amaya's low and steady voice would grow louder in the heat of an argument.

—That isn't literature, those are sentimentalities.

—The *Diary of Anne Frank*, sentimental?

Amaya shot daggers with her eyes at Marta Seite.

—And also *Le petit prince* by St. Exupéry. The *Diary of Anne Frank* was published incomplete by the girl's father after her death. His attitude is the same as that of the family with the cripple from *Divinas Palabras*, by Valle-Inclán,[86] whose members fight amongst themselves to put him out in the street on a little board with wheels to exhibit him and make money from his suffering… That isn't literature. I don't understand how you lower yourself to speaking about such works.

Implacable, Amaya tore apart any writer they brought up. When someone argued in favor of Rodríguez Aura: "He has worked a lot, and Goethe used to say that he who buries himself in work is saved", she categorically would respond.

—Yes, but if he is an idiot, he is not saved.

Her responses would produce the same collective ecstasy as the running of the bulls. Amaya charged, and the bullring divided by sun and shadow urged her on so that she would show them what she was made of. She was valiant, and the turn coat fans shouted to her "quote him, quote him", as they did to the bullfighters. If she was scared, she never showed it. Seated on the floor in the lotus position, the ashtray on top of the Aubusson between her legs, she converted Ashby's library into a bullring. "We're going to buy some cushions and throw them on the floor", Nora told him. "Since Amaya arrived, your friends are rejecting our armchairs." "Yes, you're right"—Ashby agreed. Nora then concluded:

—Since she has been coming, the Saturdays are different.

—How so?

—I don't know, but they're different. I feel as if she is officiating at mass and all of you are her parishioners.

—And what about you?

—Not me—she responded and left the bedroom.

5

Ashby had a very good opinion of himself, and success increased it. The only thing that bothered him was that Amaya didn't fall under his spell. Since he was used to all women doing so instantly, he was confident that Amaya would be no exception.

Amaya invited them over for dinner as well. Given the position of her husband, everyone thought that she would outdo the Egberts in luxury and prosperity, but it was not the case.

While she was receiving her guests, Amaya was already accustomed to improvising dinner, to such an extent that one night around one o'clock she offered delicious sandwiches that a young woman without an apron handed out on a very heavy silver tray, and the guests ate them wrapped up in sheets of coarse paper on Meissen dinnerware. When Jorge Portilla tried to cut his with a fork and knife, Amaya exclaimed:

—Don't be a hick, sandwiches are meant to be eaten with your hands, just go and wash them first.

While Portilla made his way to the bathroom, she gave a lecture about the snobbishness of certain stuck-up people.

—There's nothing more cruel than an elite. They are cruel because of their ignorance and stupidity, because they aren't the least bit aware of their historical duty to others. There is no one further removed from the tragic sense of life than the rich.

—And the masses?

—The masses are also coarse and ignorant, they are also mediocre, neither do they ask themselves where they're going or why they're on earth, but, all things considered, they're better than the elites who only worry about themselves.

She exerted a moral influence, or at least stirred up the autocratic feeling of her listeners. Was that what she was proposing? Her lively face displayed a fascinating range of expressions. Her emotions danced beneath her skin.

The servants of the house were also different from what one would expect. Amaya would give orders that none of them knew how to obey.

—The soup plates, Salustia, you know what I mean, the ones that are in the big cabinet next to the kitchen…

—Aye, Señora, how am I supposed to know that if I started with you this morning?

The table, which was set at the last moment, also offered its own surprises.

—And the roast chicken?

—I put it in the soup tureen.

—Who told you, you idiot, that chickens go in the soup tureen? Get out of my sight and get it out of there immediately!

After taking it out, the terrified girl threw it on the floor, and the chicken noisily slid under the pantry closet. That night, the guests, who never did get to eat any of the chicken, got more drunk than usual, because Amaya and her invisible husband's bar was first class, as was the splendid wine cellar. Amaya delegated the task of choosing the year and the brand of wine to one of her guests. From what one could see, Alfonso's taste in wines was notable. Amaya, disagreeable, dispatched Ashby.

—We need about ten bottles of Mouton Rothschild. I'm going to serve barbecued pork and blood sausage…

—Barbecued pork with Mouton Rothschild!?—asked Ashby.

—Do you have any objections? Pol Roger champagne then, perhaps it will go better with the blood sausage… I'm going to direct Sindulfo to carry up a box of it…Perhaps a box isn't enough, better to have two.

In the wine cellar with Sindulfo, who was spinning his straw hat between his hands, Ashby asked:

—Have you worked for the Señora very long?

—No, she picked me up this morning on the road.

—On the road to where?

—To Temixco. She took the five of us in her car…She asked us if were hungry, and when we told her that we hadn't had any tortillas since yesterday, she told us to get in, and here we are.

Ashby never again saw that same Sindulfo. In fifteen days, the "servants"—if you could call them that—had changed completely. A woman with her head wrapped up in a red scarf like Aunt Jemima opened the door. In the middle of the meeting, the same woman entered the room without any inhibition:

—Amaya dear, could you give me a smoke?

Amaya threw her her cigarettes and the woman caught them in the air. She returned them in the same way.

—Thank you dear.

She left, dragging her feet, which were in some broken plastic thongs, and Amaya, without further ado, returned to their conversation.

Ashby's gaze met that of Amaya. What went on in that house would be impossible in any other. That night, there was no sign of dinner. All of a sudden Amaya sprang up from the floor and shouted:

—Belem, go up to my bedroom: on top of the wardrobe there is a large basket filled with chocolate bars. Bring it all down here.

—Aye, no, Mayito,[87] I can't reach that high, it's very high up.

Ashby offered to go upstairs. He looked curiously at the spacious bedroom, whose very high walls were covered with bookshelves. The bed was beckoning, invaded by open books and papers piled as high as the pillows, and a portable gray Hermes typewriter had a sheet of paper in it. Ashby couldn't resist the temptation to look at what she had written. Only one sentence, obviously unfinished: "The imbeciles pursue me at all hours with their…" He looked for the imprint of Amaya's body on the bed and didn't find it. He never would find it. Amaya knew how to cover her tracks. He came down with the basket in his arms, full of Nestlé chocolate bars with almonds. There were also even more "Tin Larines" in their green and yellow packaging.

—They're my favorites.

Amaya passed out the bars. They were hard, tasted rancid, and surely had been in the basket for a long time.

—You're eating my yearly supply. They're what gives me my energy when I write.

—Ah, you write?

—Of course I write.

Although Amaya made categorical affirmations, never had she made one so resounding. Everyone thought that she was a painter, although no one could say that they knew her work. Ashby asked her:

—Show us your *atelier*.

—I don't paint here in my house, I have my studio in Coyoacán.

—On what street?

—I'm not telling. It's my *sancta sanctorum*.

—Will you have an exhibition then?

—Who knows. Alfonso says that it wouldn't be appropriate.

—Why?

—Who knows, I think it's because of the investors.

—The investors?

—Yes, the businessmen from other countries that he deals with could be scandalized…

—I don't understand, what do you paint then?

—I'll paint you some violins if you want.

—Seriously, it's just that I don't understand.

—Neither do I—Amaya sadly shook her long hair.

In another meeting, Amaya offered coffee recently brought in from Jalapa. As it was very strong, some asked for cream. She quickly delegated Jesusa, a new exotic presence with wide hips and greasy hair. She ordered her to put it in a precious little silver jar from Sheffield. When she served it, the cream did not want to mix with the black liquid:

—Jesusa you idiot—called Amaya—, this cream is sour. Where did you buy it?

—From the Chinese man on the corner, Seño Mayito.[88]

—Well, that Chinese man sells only junk, listen to me. Go and return it and get him to give you another.

—But how can I, Seño Mayito, they already closed! It's too late. The Chinese man lowered the curtain after me…

That same night, Ashby commented to Nora in the bedroom:

—She is really one of a kind.

—In my opinion she is truly lazy and I'm sick of her. With so much money, what would it cost her to get a good cook and order dinner ahead of time? What would it cost her to have a decent waiter? And a porter and a gardener? How is it possible that every time that she invites us over we run into a new gang of outlaws?

—She's an original.

—I understand her husband. No wonder we don't know him, I would flee too if I had to live in that house.

In spite of so many unpleasant culinary experiences, the friends came en masse.

—It's just that she is thinking about something else. That's why she forgets the meal—they would say to excuse her—. She works a lot, she doesn't have time.

—What exactly does she do?

No one could explain it.

—Her brain is one that never rests. What a brain! I bet it weighs as much as Einstein's.

—Don't exaggerate either.

The women appreciated Amaya less than the men.

—What do they see in her that's so beautiful? She has a little pockmark on her nose.

—It's very cute.

—Yes, but that doesn't make her beautiful.

The sorcery she exercised on the intellectuals got stronger with time.

—Do you know why?—Marta said to Nora. Because Amaya is mysterious. One never knows where she is, with whom she is, why her husband doesn't make an appearance, what it is that she writes, what it is that she paints, and where she goes with her white car that she drives too fast. She travels a lot around the Republic but she only lets it slip once in a while that she went to Tlaxcala, to San Luis Potosí, to Chilpancingo.

—Perhaps she's a big fraud—Nora responded.

—No, no, it's not that simple, it doesn't have anything to do with deception; she knows how to cultivate mystery, and that fascinates men.

Everyone agreed that Amaya didn't turn on the lights, and that she always had a fire in her fireplace, projecting flashes and shadows onto the walls and furniture in the living room of her house; all of this immersed them in another world. Every time that she herself got up from the carpet to throw a log on the fire, the flash of light transformed her into a sorceress. It was extraordinary what the flames did to her face, to her silhouette; all of her being became mephistophelian; that light that smoothed out the profile of other women, gave her the contours of a harpy.

"The invisible man" became the nickname of Alfonso Chacel, her husband.

—Listen, I understand that he doesn't attend the Egbert's gatherings, but the fact that he doesn't attend them at his own house either is really strange. Does he really exist?—asked the most scheming, Christine Schneider.

—You don't even forgive your own mother, maybe you should take a look in a mirror before criticizing others.

Amaya's dominion over the group was indisputable. One night, when Marta told them that everyone should go to Coyoacán, to the Casa Azul[89] of Frida Kahlo,[90] because Diego[91] and Frida were throwing a big party",[92] and they had the privilege of having been invited, Amaya said in a very soft voice that she, of course, would not go. They circled around her, come on, let's go, it's fascinating, Amaya, you have to get to know their pre-Columbian[93] art collection, they say that it's splendid, their parties are typically Mexican. Then Amaya raised her voice, little by little, and exploded in a rage that cleared her mind and made her speak like a visionary.

—That is folklorism, exoticism. If there is something to flee from, it's quaintness. Nothing does more harm to the country than those farces.

—It's a farce to be Mexican?

—Well, don't you think it's a farce to dress in huehuenche[94] or tehuana[95] style for dinner when every day the Señoras go around wearing designs from Paris and wearing a skirt and a blouse like everyone else? Frida Kahlo, the cripple, uses petticoats to hide her broken spine and her skinny leg, but as for the rest, just what are they trying to prove? Andrés Henestrosa gave up Juchitán for a seat in the Congress.

Amidst the astonishment she took a long drink from her glass and continued.

—What business does she have then dressing in pants made from blankets on Saturday nights? It's bad enough that she exploits this poor country and makes fun of the Indians.

—Nobody is making fun, Mayita, calm down.

—They, yes, they have the right to "typical" attire, but we don't. Haven't they realized that the essence of Mexico isn't in its colorful wools, and in its aguas de chía,[96] but in something more profound: its misery? That they don't hang that around their necks like mortar? Instead of getting together to drink tequila and strawberry liqueur and eating romeritos[97], why don't they go for a walk by the

Mezquital to see what's in the bellies of those whose costumes they copy as if they had no sense of shame?

"This woman is a just angel", said Ashby to himself when he saw her blond hair forming a halo of fire.

When Amaya lowered her voice and sat down again on the floor, Marta and the rest of the women did the same. The men followed. Marta didn't even call the Casa Azul to apologize. The Riveras, Kahlo, Best Maugard, O'Gorman,[98] and company didn't merit it. From that night on the women professed for Amaya an admiration that made them ask: "Are you cold, Amaya?" "Can I fix you something to eat?" "Do you want another *drink*, *darling*?".

The words "simulators" and "frauds" appeared frequently in her discourse, and many expected her to cross examine them, irritated: "Don't be simplistic or schematic…" Mexico, a hybrid country, wasn't democratic, revolutionary, or conservative, or anything, and much less didn't even know where it was going. It didn't have a plan, and the worst thing that one could say about any country was that it had no mysticism. The United States followed their manifest destiny, but the Mexicans, what did they follow? What did they have? The only thing that could save them, like the Polish, was their religion, but that was also hybrid, blind, and ignorant, manipulated by a reactionary and ill-prepared clergy. To our misfortune, Bartolomé de las Casas[99] died three hundred years ago.

The women in the group were surprised to learn that Amaya kneeled to pray, joining her hands every night, and that she considered herself profoundly catholic. Her sign of the cross, after the seventh drink, came across as pretentious.

Ashby went from one surprise to another. When she felt that they gave her the recognition she deserved, Amaya lowered her guard and now entered the Egbert's house on Saturdays as if it was her own.

6

When Amaya spoke to Nora to ask her if she and Ashby could accompany her to Morelos, it seemed the most natural thing in the world to Nora that Ashby go alone:

—Tomorrow I have to attend the mothers' day festival in the children's school. I do realize that it's kind of tacky, but they'll be very disappointed if I don't go. Wait a second, Amaya, right now I'll insist that Ashby go. I'm sure he will be delighted to accompany you.

She didn't have to insist very much. Ashby accepted without hesitation. He would come in his car to pick Amaya up and they would return around nightfall.

Going along the highway to Cuernavaca with Amaya by his side awoke in Ashby a sense of exaltation that rejuvenated him. "I've turned into an adolescent again", he thought. The countryside seemed beautiful, grandiose to him. It was a delight to see her in a white skirt, her legs bare, her childlike feet in high-heeled sandals. Her pretty legs, her feet, like those of the baby Jesus in the manger, touched him. He restrained the impulse to park the Mercedes on the curb and lean down to kiss them.

—Your feet are as beautiful as María Asúnsolo's, he limited himself to telling her:

—Dolores del Río's cousin?—asked Amaya.

—Yes.

—Ah, she is also a woman of the people!

Amaya launched into a tirade against the movie *María Candelaria*[100] by "El Indio" Fernández and Gabriel Figueroa. "Its post card skies and dialogues are phonier than Antonio Caso's[101] broad forehead. He didn't even have more than two finger widths of forehead, and in order to have the head of a philosopher, he shaved it. This is a country of puppets, a country without a face, a country ashamed of itself, a country of liars. Listen, even the cooking recipes are lies and treason. They asked Doña Catita Escandón for a dessert that she called "almond fondant". She always refused to give it, and when she died, one of her daughter-in-laws opened her notebook which she kept locked up, and read the famous recipe for the sweet, written in her handwriting. It started with: "peel the jícamas[102]…"

—All the more commendable on her part, to convert jícamas into almonds, Güerita…[103]

Ashby enjoyed her witty remarks, but suddenly Amaya was very quiet.

—What are you thinking about?

—About the countryside. You have to stay silent when you're in the mountains. What a shame that the politicians enjoy this country more than the campesinos,[104] the Indians, those who make it what it is.

The sun came in through the window and made Amaya's hair and bare shoulders look golden, and Ashby felt so good that he exclaimed, his grey eyes pouring out tenderness:

—I have never been so happy.

—Oh, really?—responded Amaya with a big smile and lit a cigarette.

—Can you tell me why we are going to Morelos?

—You'll see.

—And to what part are we going exactly?

—You'll find out.

Ashby put his hand on Amaya's, laughing. Amaya didn't pull her hand away.

—Ah, what an enigmatic Güerita!

He drove with Amaya's hand under his for as long as she allowed him to:

—I want to light another cigarette—she explained when she slipped it out from under his.

—Don't smoke so much. Why do you smoke so much?

—I like to, it calms me.

—But you smoke too much, Güerita.

—Why aren't you less formal with me?[105]

—Because I respect you a lot. Nobody inspires so much respect in me. There's something very special about you.

—Aye, please, Ashby, don't get all sentimental with me and pay attention to the curves!

—That's what I'm doing, Güerita.

They went back to silence again. At his side, with the freedom that women who know they are beautiful take, Amaya sat with her legs folded under her "to see better", and Ashby very quickly realized that compliments bothered his companion. Seated that way, she looked younger and more at ease than he had ever seen her.

—How attractive you are.

—Amaya blew smoke in his face:

—Don't continue, Ashby, or God will punish you.

—What a totally absurd comment!

When they arrived in Cuernavaca, Amaya pointed out a dirt road to him. They closed the windows because of the dust and the Mercedes started to shake because of the potholes and the windy road. For a moment Ashby thought that his car hadn't been made to withstand those proletarian bumps but he chastised himself for his pettiness. The woman at his side could really reduce the Mercedes to a heap of metal, just as she could reduce him to a heap of entrails. Amaya sat down again "like God commands", as the saying goes, and lit another cigarette, pointing out to her driver:

—This road is a little bit long, you have to get used to it. It will take us about an hour and a half if all goes well for us.

At last, after passing various towns that only the sun and the sugarcane brightened, Amaya asked Ashby to stop the car in front of a hut:

—Here it is.

She got out without waiting for Ashby and from the path in between the cane she shouted:

—Tiburcia, Tiburcia!

A few dogs barked, and when she heard them, Tiburcia came out of the door of her hut and went to meet Amaya.

—Seño Mayito, thank God you're here.

Amaya embraced her and Tiburcia started to cry.

—What happened, Tibu, what happened?

—They took them away, Seño Mayito, they took them away! They arrested seven of them for going around reclaiming the land, like you told them to. Now they have them in prison, in Cuernavaca.

—Swine, satraps,[106] villains! Don't worry Tibu, we'll get them out in no time at all—said Amaya with such sureness that Tiburcia took off her apron, took her purse, and shouted:

—Plato, Plato dear, come here—and seeing the boy she stated—:Let me just wipe your nose.

She took her grandson by the hand, and without further ado followed Amaya and Ashby who were already making their way to the car. Ashby didn't even dare ask for a glass of water, given the furious look in Amaya's eyes.

—Those scoundrels, they're going to pay for this.

For an hour and a half on their way back to Temixco they endured the dirt road. Amaya was speaking with Tiburcia in a low voice, the chubby kid was looking out the window, and when Amaya spoke to Ashby it was only to ask if he couldn't go a little faster. The shock absorbers were hitting the stones on the road, and the heat was becoming unbearable with the windows closed because of the dust. The child and the woman smelled bad. Amaya didn't seem to notice it. She was boiling in her own rage. Every once and a while she exclaimed: swine, wretches, villains. Tiburcia rambled on endlessly in a drone in which Ashby could only make out "and then I said… and then the judge went and said". When they finally got to Cuernavaca, Amaya, in an angry tone of voice ordered Ashby:

—Go immediately to the Governor's Palace.

—Why are we going to the Palace?

—Just park there—said Amaya in a tone that didn't permit a rebuttal.

Ashby parked in front of a solider holding his rifle with both hands who informed him that he could not leave the car there. Amaya then shouted:

—We are going to see the governor. You, you little grunt, you'd be better off taking care of the car. Let's go, Ashby, let's go, Plato dear.

Amaya gave her arm to Tiburcia to climb the stairs. When they got to the top she let her go. Tall and slender, she continued quickly down the hall. In the antechamber Amaya hardly paused before the secretary, who was reading *Esto*.

—I've come to see the governor.

—The honorable governor is in a meeting.

—Oh, really? Well I don't care.

Urged on by her extremely beautiful anger, Amaya opened the door and entered. Behind his desk, the governor looked at her, flustered:

—Mr. Governor, you get those men out of here immediately, or I'll start a scandal in Mexico's newspapers that you'll never forget. We all know that your son has appropriated eight hundred hectares for himself in Temixco.

The governor got up and came out from behind his desk with a look of horror on his face.

—Señora, what's this all about? I don't have the slightest idea of what you're talking about.

—You have been holding seven Temixco campesinos as prisoners for the past two weeks.

—Señora, who, which ones?

Amaya's fury destroyed everything in its wake, and she had a fiery look in her dark eyes. It was a spectacle to see her, standing tall, in front of the governor who was shaking uncontrollably. Tiburcia, Ashby, and the boy were also watching Amaya, paralyzed by her wrath.

—Let's see, Tibu, give the names of the men to the governor.

Tiburcia then recited the names in her trembling, old voice:

—Aristeo Guillén, Emiliano Vértiz, Pancho Uribe, "The Corncob", Anastasio Gómez, "Trashcan", Ramón Flores Medina, "Stinky", Enedino Pérez Álvarez, and Candelario Acevedo. I think that's all of them already, Seño Mayito.

—When did they enter the prison?—Amaya asked again, furious.

—Two weeks from the day before yesterday.

—What are the charges?—inquired the leader of the state.

—What else would they be, governor? What are all poor Mexicans accused of—intervened the haughty and lucid Amaya that Ashby had listened to the night when Diego Rivera and Frida Kahlo dared to invite them over for dinner—. They are accused of invading the land that used to be theirs, the land that your son appropriated to create a housing development. Unlike you, the government, the PRI[107], unlike the politicians, who, when they aren't bastards, are idiots, they don't have the chance to get their hands on someone else's land every six years. Their nobility would prevent it. These are *real* people. They are the rightful owners—the land titles have been theirs since colonial times—, you sons of a bitch, usurpers, who rob and assault them, *you* deserve a public lynching but *they're* the ones who are put in jail. And of course, the ones you dare to denounce.

—Señora, calm down, let's discuss this…

—Let's speak, my ass! Now it's my turn to talk, we are fed up with listening to you people. Pure lies, pure demagoguery. You people are the silent accomplices, what am I saying, the authors of the systematic corruption of this poor country. You people bribe, falsify, humiliate, bend the laws, silence, hide, and kill. The PRI and the government are the hangman's noose that you use to asphyxiate the Mexican people.

Amaya took a breath and Ashby thought she was going to stop there, but no, her voice became more impetuous:

—While you guys build your weekend houses in cooperative lands and drink highballs in your heated swimming pools, they work from sunrise to sunset, and yet you still take away their land titles.

—Señora, please, don't lose your temper, I'm going to call my secretary, I need to consult the police chief. We will see what the situation is and what should be done accordingly.

—I'm not budging from here, governor, until the men are released.

—I don't have them here, Señora, I cannot resolve this in less than seventy-two hours.

—I'm giving you seventy-two minutes.

Amaya was giving the orders, and the governor was nervously obeying. He telephoned and slowly read the names of the prisoners into the receiver. When he got up, he informed Amaya in an almost obsequious way:

—You will have your campesinos at five o'clock this afternoon.

—Amaya said to him:

—Very good, we'll wait for them here. Or better yet, we'll go to them in jail.

—No, Señora—said the frightened governor who was thinking about the scandal that would cause—, no, no, no, we'll bring them here.

Ashby had become invisible to Amaya. She didn't ask him if he was hungry or thirsty, nothing.

—Sit wherever you like, Señora, I have to leave for a moment, but my secretary will stay here to give you whatever you need.

He completely ignored Ashby, Tiburcia, and Plato.

The only response Amaya made was to make herself comfortable in a leather sofa and light a cigarette. The governor left. Amaya pointed out a place next to her to Tiburcia and the boy. Ashby took a seat and leafed through the magazine *Siempre!*[108] which is always in government offices. Plato fell asleep with his mouth open and started to snore like a puppy. Once and a while he coughed in the middle of his sleep, a dry cough that made your heart melt. Amaya didn't say anything until she saw that she didn't have anymore cigarettes. She crushed the packet in her right hand and asked Ashby:

—Would you be so kind as to go and buy me some Delicados?

—Yes, of course, and don't you want something to eat?

—I'm not hungry—she categorically responded.

—And you, Tiburcia?

—Whatever Seño Mayito says.

Ashby felt himself get faint in the street. It was the first time in his life that he had missed a meal. Never, if his memory served him correctly, had something like this happened to him before, except in the hospital. In a fruit store he gulped down two juices and he stopped in front of a hot-dog stand and asked for one that tasted more delicious than in Woodsworth, Illinois, where he competed without a single knock-down. In the corner shop, besides the cigarettes, he bought five Tin Larines and when he entered the government offices he put them on Amaya's lap. "I remembered that you like them, Güerita." Amaya just barely murmured "thank-you" in a very soft voice. Ashby then gave her a kiss on the cheek: "You were wonderful". He had never kissed her before and he got excited when he felt her cheek and smelled her perfume. "Thank-you", she said, again with the same neutral voice, and gave four of the Tin Larines to Plato, who had just woken up, and the other she kept in her purse.

Fifteen minutes later, seven campesinos in dirty pants and unwashed shirts came into the governor's office, dragging their sandals and carrying their palm hats in their hands. Tiburcia and the boy rushed into the arms of the tallest one. Amaya embraced each one of them, dismissed the secretary with a wave of her hand, and asked if he had the release documents.

—Each one has his own, Señora.

—And their deeds?

—As well, everything is in order, right men?

—Yes, Seño Mayito.

The campesinos talked to her. They seemed to know her well.

In the street she announced:

—Now we're all going to eat.

When they finished and sat back in their Carta Blanca[109] chairs in the restaurant that served them fast food, Amaya asked Ashby:

—Aren't you going to pay?

—Of course, Ashby hurried to say, embarrassed.

—Now we are going to take a taxi. The Señor, Tiburcia, her husband, the child Plato, you Trashcan, and I, are going to go in the car and the rest of you will go in a hired one.

They returned to Temixco, in the taxi, which was enveloped in the cloud of dust stirred up by the Mercedes. Amaya, seated beside Ashby, talked only to Trashcan and Aristeo, Tiburcia's husband, who held his grandson in his arms. They slowly told her how they had suffered. Amaya only exclaimed once and a while in a truly sad voice: "How is it possible, how is it possible".

It was getting dark when they said good-bye. Amaya asked Ashby:

—Can't you give them something?

—Of course, Güerita.

Ashby opened his Hermès wallet and left only what he needed for the drive home.

—Here, divide it among yourselves.

Aristeo didn't thank him, and Tiburcia raised her earthy voice.

—May God reward you, Seño Mayito.

During the return home, Amaya finished her pack of cigarettes. On the roof of the car, the stars were fleeing in the opposite direction. They were going downhill, and the city appeared like another immense star at the bottom of the dark valley, and it moved Ashby. It was as beautiful as Amaya claiming the rights of the campesinos in front of the governor. When Ashby could speak, he said:

—Thanks to you I've had one of the most beautiful days of my life, Güerita.

Amaya lifted her legs and settled herself in without responding.

Both of them had completely forgotten Nora. Ashby, who loved the theatre, went over the scene from the Greek tragedy in which Amaya gave the orders to the governor, and he thought that no director could have directed his actors with such wisdom. That woman, now at his side, was a genius, and not only was she a genius, but she possessed grandeur as well. What a privilege to have seen her, listened to her, and to have her now in the back seat!

When they arrived at her house at eleven o'clock at night, Amaya asked:

—Do you want to come in?

She turned the light on in the room, took the Tin Larín out of her purse, and said to him:

—Don't you want to go up and throw it in the basket? You already know the way.

—Of course.

Amaya followed him on the carpeted stairway. Not a sound was heard in the house. It was the same immense silence as on the highway from Cuernavaca. Ashby reached the basket and Amaya threw her shoes on the floor, and flung herself on the bed, face up. From there she held out her arms and he took her as if he had never known any other woman.

At three in the morning, Ashby was sleeping soundly when Amaya, beside him in the bed, shook him.

—You have to go right now.

—Why? Don't you love me, Güerita?

She had sat down, the sheet around her golden breasts. She was looking at him distantly.

—No.

—Why?

—Because you've never done anything beautiful.

—But I've never done anything ugly.

—I don't know that—she responded thoughtfully.

Ashby tried to embrace her.

—Have you forgotten already that you have a wife? Get dressed!

Wrapped up in the sheet, she suddenly kneeled next to the bed.

—What are you doing?

—I'm praying for you.

—What are you praying?

—I said: "God, forgive Ashby for what he did to his wife".

—Oh, really? And didn't you ask forgiveness for yourself?

—No.

—Why not?

—Because I don't believe in marriage.

Ashby got dressed. From the bedroom door, the last image that he took with him was that of Amaya seated in the bed in the lotus position, with her disheveled blonde hair, trying to keep the sheet around her nude body while she was lighting another Delicados.

In the Puebla street, which was deserted, after starting the car, he saw another vehicle heading straight for the garage, and a man getting out to open it.

"It's the husband", he thought jealously.

He changed gears, stepped on the gas, and for the first time since he started the adventure with Amaya, he thought about what the hell he could say to his wife.

7

At the gatherings that followed in the Egberts' house, Amaya avoided being alone with Ashby and never responded to his telephone calls. On the other hand, she was sure to sit next to Nora, to shower her with praise. Ashby, who would get a startle every time he saw a white Chrysler in the street, and who didn't give up until he saw who was driving it, started to suffer. It was so difficult for him to see his wife and Amaya so close. The authority that Amaya exerted on the women was undeniable. She made them fall in love with her. If she had said to Nora that she looked like a Botticelli, she did the same with Sabrina, Aurora, Celia, Perpetua, and Armonía. Her comments were original, and unlike the salt statues called psychoanalysts, she offered solutions. The wives would listen to her, hypnotized, staring into Amaya's deep dark eyes. She gave all sorts of advice in a soft voice. "Nora, you are as radiant as the sun, you are made of an undefined substance, your colors are those of the sea, you must dress in tones ranging from magenta to emerald, or aqua, or lilac. Those are the ones that go well with your complexion and, in the evening, black velvet to give you depth. If you don't do so you risk flying through the sky like a shooting star." "You dress in beige a lot, Amaya. I've already seen your camel hair suits, marvelously well cut." "Yes, they're Spanish: remember, for tailored suits, Madrid; for evening gowns, Paris." "You, Dafné, don't use high collars because they kill you. You must elongate your neck with generous necklines, don't be provincial. With that shirt with the little round neck à la Claudine, your head disappears between your shoulders like a turtle's." Amaya told them about her friendship with Cocó Chanel, that major general who, after the war, decorated women with stripes, epaulets, chains and gold buttons, and made them march, energetic and resplendent, along the Champs Elysées until they passed under the Arc de Triomphe.

—Certain clothes bring bad luck—she told Raquel, who would wear some awful shawls.

—Really?

—I fill a valise with blouses, skirts, and even nightshirts and stockings that I don't feel comfortable with, and at the first traffic light I give them to whoever I run into. One day I gave it all to a traffic cop.

—For your girlfriend—I said to him.

—I don't have a girlfriend.

—Then give it to your grandmother.

—I don't have a grandmother.

—Then wear it yourself, honey.

She made you laugh, her endless cleverness was a siren's song. She had lived in other countries. "It's better to paint your eyelashes with kohl, like Arab women." "If you walk with your buttocks tight and tuck in your tummy, you'll never lose your abdominal muscles." "Just look at your hair, don't go back to that hairdresser, he left you looking like a palm tree."

—And you, what's the secret to your shiny long hair, Amaya?

—I let it grow and don't torture it.

When not talking about herself, Amaya made use of the leftover time to listen to the rest, and she did so with complete attention. She was all eyes, all ears, and she easily extracted herself from the conversation. She made them feel unique, like one of a kind.

—Nobody has ever told me what you've discovered without even knowing me very well, Amaya.

—It's that I'm older than you are—she responded in yet another compliment.

—Amaya casually did their astral charts for them, but much more intelligently than just any fortune-teller would. Now, yes, Amaya's empire was absolute. She demanded closeness, because her voice was extremely soft, except in her moments of sacred anger. Sometimes she was extraordinarily talkative, sometimes there was no way to get a word out of her; she would just smoke, and her silence ruined the meeting. It was incredible how in such little time she managed to have such complete control over them. They sensed in Amaya an almost sacred devotion, a mystery that once and awhile showed in the graciousness of her attitudes, but none of them had been able to grasp it, much less define it. Amaya was very elusive, that's why she was so valuable to them.

At nineteen years of age—confined to his iron bed in a room in Lister Hospital with a view of the Thames—Ashby had developed an almost supernatural idea as to what a woman is. He nourished his dream not only with the vigor of his younger days, but also with the images that the white and starched nurses gave him, with their blue and violet eyes and their delicate waists. They seemed infinitely cute to him in their race to respond to a ring of a bell, in the expression on their faces as they bent over him when it was time to take his temperature, in their white arms when they shook the thermometer, their lips surprisingly red in the middle of their faces because English women don't get much sun. They smelled pretty, the way they walked was pretty, they gave him pretty looks.

He discovered that besides reading, there was nothing he liked more than watching them. They were his only way to see birds, to remember butterflies, to think about dragonflies and about the ladybugs that bring good luck. What wonders God has put on this earth, he would say. He told Alvin Whitehead about his discovery.

—Besides horses, the manifestation of God's power on earth is women. Please, explain something to me about them, about their spirit, their physiology, their flitting around, their breath.

Even the chief nurse, with her moustache and everything, seemed like a sunflower to him, although a slightly withered one.

During the next visit, Doctor Whitehead brought him a book of poems by William Blake and another by Robert Browning, as well as a notebook.

Ashby never lost that feeling of amazement for women, but his wife hadn't refined it. Now Amaya made him return to his awakening to poetry, to his discovery of women in that hospital bed, to the humming in the air that took his childhood away when he thought: "I don't hope to *have* everything, what I want is to *be* everything". Restituta didn't understand him, but opened her arms, which were like a balsam. This emotion was similar to the one in the hospital, when in London, the nurse Angela, the tallest, ran the comb through his hair and beard in the night so that he would look "*beautiful*" sleeping. "*You look beautiful, anyway, it's just that you may be more so.*" If he thought he fell in love with Angela, to such an extent that every morning the sheets were soaked with white clouds that the cleaners changed without saying a word, what was happening to him now was excruciating. He would scour the streets in search of Amaya like a man possessed. In those years he asked Alvin Whitehead if a man could die of love, and when the doctor gravely told him yes, he resigned himself to die. Now Amaya stirred up the same fevers from his puberty. He spent entire hours holed away in the library; he didn't go up to his bedroom until he was sure he would find Nora sleeping, and went out during the day, leaving messages for her with the doorman. "Tell the Señora that I'm going to eat at the club", "Please be advised that I'm not coming home for dinner". The only day that he wasn't absent was Saturday, but then his torment started with Amaya's appearance, who pretended not to see him, and who only had eyes for Nora. She gave her a kiss very close to the ear or the lips, wrapped her arms around her waist and said to her: "You are some woman". Nora laughed, without trying to free herself.

Ashby agreed to go to the Díaz-Holland's house because Nora told him that they would consider his refusal a real offense.

—Think about your children's future. We're talking about the most influential family in Mexico here.

—My God, the things I have to listen to.

Nora then changed her tactic:

—It's a formal dinner, only twenty-four people, and the best thing for you to wear would be your tuxedo. You look distinguished from head to toe in it.

—Nora, please.

—It's a fact, my love, every one of your gestures is noble. Whatever you do, you'll never be vulgar.

—You want to force me to go.

Defeated, Ashby bathed and dressed, thinking about Amaya. *She* wasn't conventional. Nora, who had managed to get out of the mold thanks to poetry, had returned to it right away. Nora's world was one of rules put in her head since infancy, while Amaya's spread out under an immense sky. Nora waited for orders to fall from the sky, and her sky was the blue quadrangle on top of the Sacred Family and her house in the prestigious Roma neighborhood. She was a fine mare; she followed dictated orders to the letter of the law. Amaya broke molds, her blows could kill, she was born audacious, and she carried on her shoulders twenty or more years of making her own decisions.

However, when Nora asked: "Are you ready, love?" and made her appearance, he couldn't stop thinking that his wife, dressed in white, with her hair swept up and the nape of her neck exposed, was also a figure whose beauty was like that of the clouds.

When he entered, the first thing that he recognized was the bare back of Amaya, who was talking animatedly with a group. Nora ran to greet her, and Amaya made the introductions without giving a single surname, holding out her white arm which sported a diamond bracelet: Nora, Alfonso, Ashby, María, Víctor, Silvia, Sergio. From that moment on, Ashby couldn't take his eyes off of her. Self-assured, she looked like she was the hostess. In the work being performed there, she was the leading actress. She came and went on her long legs, she shook the hair away from her face with an abrupt movement of her head, she laughed boisterously about something that surely wasn't worth being laughed about, and she welcomed the late arriving ones, the guests that came towards her like moths to the light.

Ashby, who of course remembered the last names on the cards placed on the table, realized that Alfonso was Amaya's husband, who until today had been invisible, and he felt a stab of jealousy in his back. He noticed Amaya's brazen stare. A few meters away from her lord and master, she scrutinized him vulgarly and looked him up and down, sizing him up, and, as if that wasn't enough, with a cigarette in her hand, she came towards him, asking him in a very loud voice if he knew, as a student of the liberal arts, that the president of the University was about to fall.[110]

Right after that, Nora hung on her husband's arm, not so much for Ashby, as for Amaya.

Without waiting for the response, Amaya went towards another group with the same light and active gracefulness that made the guests lust after her. She was not the hostess but she was the welcoming one, the warm one, and the one who opened her arms. The generosity of her smile covered everything, and Ashby immediately included himself in that. He wouldn't have given more value to a solemn promise. Amaya's smile was directed at him—of that he was sure—, in spite of the fact that she sat with others and listened to them. She crossed and uncrossed her legs just for him, and she threw her head back in the middle of a hearty laugh only for him. She shamelessly exhibited herself for him alone.

The dinner, on the other hand, was very restrained, even solemn in the somber dining room. The guests talked with their fellow guests on the right, on the left, and never across the table, with its splendid settings. The faces, illuminated by six-candle candelabras, were memorable. This liturgical and phantasmal dinner would also have pleased Alvin Whitehead.

Amaya and her spouse didn't exchange a word the entire night, and only at the end, when there were just a few couples left, did he pick her up, the queen of the night, like an umbrella abandoned at the door. What shocked Ashby the most was that Amaya followed him without saying a word, and almost without saying goodbye. Nora commented to him:

—Did you notice? He led our brave Amaya away like a little lamb, and he isn't even an attractive man.

The following Saturday, Amaya didn't show up at the Egbert's house and neither did she respond to Ashby's calls. On the telephone, somebody called Serafina, with an unfamiliar voice, said that the child Mayito—why did they all call her child?—had gone to the interior of the country.

8

One month afterwards, already close to two in the morning, Ashby lifted the telephone receiver in the library, irritated. Just as he was about to insult the insolent person, he heard Amaya's voice, which, in a surprisingly intimate way, was imploring, in almost childlike tones:

—Can you come to the Cuauhtémoc police station?

—What happened to you?

—I'll explain it to you later. Can you come right now?

—Where is that?

—Somewhere around Violeta, Zaragoza and Mina Street, around there.

—I've never been in that area.

Amaya shouted out away from the receiver:

—Let's see, boys, where are we?—They must have said something to her because she indicated—: It's in Cristóbal Colón Street, around there, near the Violeta Sports Centre, around Mosqueta street.

—I'm on my way.

Ashby left a message for Nora, who was sleeping, and took his Mercedes out of the garage and the Roji guide from the trunk. He wasn't familiar with the streets with the names of flowers; violet, white rose, a small rose that grows in a bush. There was no traffic, and, as he had directions he arrived in no time at all. In the police station he saw the blond head of his love in the middle of a group of young men, obviously students. In her leather coat, Amaya turned her head and came towards him, holding a boy by the hand. He was shocked to see fear in Amaya's dark eyes:

—They want to put us in jail.

—Why?

—For criminal association, damaging private property, and damaging public roadways.

—What did you do?

—We set up a barricade.

—With a leather coat?—smiled Ashby.

—That was to help us sleep.

—How?

—We've been in the street for three days, we used it as a mattress.

—You? In the street? You will never cease to amaze me! Who is that boy?

—He is "Dummkopf". His mother gave him to me.

The dirty boy with black hands and a greasy little cap didn't take his eyes off Amaya.

—He even had green scabs in his nose and a bite on his neck. He said that his stepfather bit him. As he didn't want to stop clinging to me and is kind of slow, his mother gave him to me.

—What?

—She's a drug addict—Amaya explained impatiently.

She brought the boy closer to her legs and looked down at him.

—Hey, you wouldn't happen to have a cigarette, would you? We finished ours hours ago.

Ashby took a pack out. Amaya took one and held out the box to a chubby guy.

—Finish them.

There was also fear in the boys' eyes, all very young and dressed in denim, who made a circle around him, like the flock with the savior.

—The bail is three thousand pesos—they whispered amongst themselves, scared to say such a large figure out loud.

—Are you going to pay the bail for us?

Ashby went over to the counter and opened his wallet. He gave his name and paid.

While he walked towards the door, the young men surrounded him. Ashby was shocked when he saw how tired Amaya was.

—I'm going to take you home this instant.

—Not before dropping them off at theirs.

—They won't fit in the car.

—We'll take a taxi.

—No, Señora Amaya, I'll go by bus.

—And I live close to here.

—Yes, I'll accept the lift.

After dropping two of them off in the Doctores neighborhood, and another on the corner—"I'll stay here"—Ashby breathed more calmly. Once they were alone with the boy that smelt like urine, Ashby murmured with great tenderness:

—Güerita, why do you get yourself involved in so much trouble?

—Because I'm a citizen.

She said it with her head so high that Ashby had no other option but to fall silent. He waited for the next traffic light before persisting:

—And what's going to happen with Dummkopf?

—He's coming with me.

—He's going to live with you?!

—Exactly.

—It's very obvious that this child is very damaged…

—That's why I'm doing it. Needles, his mother, is twenty years old and looks like she's fifty with so many scars. They live in the street.

Amaya was watching Dummkopf with penetrating eyes. Nobody inspired as much respect in her as children did. She asked them for their opinion, and she asked what they wanted with an intensity that never failed to impress them. It's not that she was maternal, it's that she treated them as adults. Ashby suddenly decided to ask:

—Would you like to have children?

—One should never ask those types of questions! I don't understand how an educated man like yourself dares to. What extraordinarily bad taste!

—Simmer down, Güerita. I asked it because all of the sudden I saw the boy in your arms. I thought that perhaps we could…

—I don't tolerate personal questions, Ashby, please, shut up, I need silence, and you're acting drunk.

—I'm drunk with happiness at seeing you.

—Really? Then control your impulses. I'm exhausted, and the boy as well, or are you so insensitive that you haven't noticed? Come tomorrow at eight o'clock in the evening and I'll explain it all to you.

Dummkopf might be very stupid, but he was watching both of them with eyes that were saying "leave me alone now".

Amaya opened the door of her house, which was completely dark, and vanished into the semi-darkness, dragging the boy like a dog.

At eight o'clock, Amaya received Ashby in a good mood. She was once again a Vogue model, and all the colors of the sun were in her face and her clothing.

Seated on the sofa with a whiskey in his hand, Ashby asked:

—And "Dummkopf"?

—Aghh, that filthy kid! I went and returned him this afternoon. He went pee three times last night in my bed. He doesn't control his sphincters, and I certainly do not have time for that.

—You took him back to his mother?

—Yes, and Needles was none too pleased about it, but I gave her thirty pesos, and that satisfied her.

Ashby was careful to not make the slightest comment, and fixed his gaze on the yellow liquid in his glass to hide his expression.

—Very good, Amaya, I'm all ears.

From the floor, on the honey colored rug, Amaya told him that the University was a political trampoline, and that the next presidential candidate would come from there.

—Yes, and?

Her eyes shone, and she said, smiling:

—Don't interrupt me, Ashby dear.

It turns out that a group of young men whom I advised in their meetings decided to support Roberto Cabrera, the candidate from Chiapas, instead of the thief Luis Jiménez, and had printed leaflets on the Faculty of Arts mimeograph. They also agreed to expose Luis Jiménez to public opinion. During the night they splotched paint on the immense white fence of his house, and decided to raise a barricade in his cobble stoned street in San Ángel to catch him when he left: "We wanted to give him a scare". The cops converged on them at ten o'clock at night. The patrol car called three others and they took them all away. The police wanted to let her go, but she insisted on accompanying the boys.

—What you're doing is very dangerous, Güerita.

—I can't abandon them, the men trust me.

The following day, who knows how, Ashby found himself involved in what Amaya called "the movement". He had to obtain a sound system for a meeting in the Zócalo at five o'clock in the afternoon.

From the moment that Ashby opened his wallet for the first time in the court, he would have to continue doing so, without exception, in all circumstances. No one thanked him; that word wasn't fashionable. The young people gave him their confidence and he had to take that as a concession, given that he wasn't the right age and didn't deserve it.

Amaya was in the public square, without high heels, but wearing foreign slip-ons, beige gabardine pants, an ivory-colored silk shirt, and a beige cashmere sweater as well. Her hair was shining, her eyes were luminous, and she looked younger than ever. She seemed like one of them. She was an irrefutable and seductive leader. She cast the same spell on the students as she did on the Saturday *habitués*. Or perhaps even more so. Some of them called her "Señora Amaya", others "Amayux", "Amayita", "comrade", and a skinny tall one with slicked back hair, Charlie, addressed her as "woman". Amaya smiled and Ashby felt she was happy.

—You are authorized by the Executive Council to attend our assemblies— she announced to him.

In the assembly they confirmed him as a supplier for the movement. Faced with the unmerited honor, Ashby had to leave in a hurry to get a sound system. Everything was done by means of committees, and four youngsters clung to Ashby like misery to the world. They ate in cheap restaurants, they bought newspapers and magazines whose existence he didn't know of up to that point, and they visited the University at all hours; not the Faculty of Arts classrooms where they once went, but the Justo Sierra,[111] where the marathon-like sessions took place, in which the democratic and heavily attended votes decided the future. To see the attention with which Amaya followed the debates and took over the floor compensated him for his hurried errands, expenses and bad experiences. Her voice acquired biting tones because she had a lot to say, and she said it, annoyed, with great assurance. Courage magnified Amaya, it brought fire to her speech, her rapture was an inspiration, and the faces of the young people turned towards her stimulated her. She returned to her stool beside Ashby and put her arm over his, or she cuddled against his shoulder as if he were her lord and master.

Those sessions made them much closer than a night of love. Even surrounded by danger, Amaya would have a yellow-haired child at her side. He would act as her messenger. "He's my nephew", she would say. Ashby didn't know that Amaya had relatives. Or "he's the son of a friend of mine". Soon the child would disappear. Amaya, then, would violently accuse him. "He was robbing me." Or she would simply shrug her shoulders: "I told the child to go to hell". Ashby found these small presences a nuisance. They got in the way of his intimacy with Amaya.

—Leave him at your house, Amaya.

—How am I going to leave him alone? Can't you see that he's just a kid?

She gave orders relentlessly:

—My little blond, of whom I'm so fond, go sleep here on the sofa next to my room.

One night in the bedroom, with Amaya snuggled on his stomach, Ashby saw the little hairy head of the nephew of the day peeking into the room, and he pointed it out to Amaya:

—Listen, you scorpion, what do you think you're spying on?

Sometimes she said that they were her guardian angels, others she called pageboys, goblin boys, lucky charm children, little Saint Michaels, seraphs, and later she would exclaim:

—They came to betray me. They're spies.

—How? If you were the one that chose them.

—Yes, but then I realized that someone sent them to me. This Timoteo is an *agent provocateur*.

—Amaya, please, you've lost your mind.

—The government takes those kids from their houses; they choose them very young so they can mold them well…

—Güerita, your persecution complex knows no limits.

—One day you will realize that I'm right, Ashby.

—It's absurd that you see conspiracies against you on every corner, Amaya, absurd and exhausting, for you and for me.

—No one is forcing you to put up with me, get lost this instant!

Amaya could be not only rude, but vulgar.

One day, one of her protégés exposed her lie when she was explaining to Ashby:

—This pipsqueak came up to me at the Insurgentes roundabout and said to me that if I adopted him…

—No, Seño Mayito, you were the one who said that you wanted to adopt me.

—Shut up, you lying ungrateful kid.

—Many old women have wanted to adopt me, and I have a mom, but there go the horny old women chasing after me.

—I'm no old woman, you little piece of shit.

Once, when Ashby asked her why her Chrysler smelled like a fish market, Amaya gave him a big smile:

—Well, what can I do about it, Ashby? It's the smell of the people.

Since Egbert got them out of jail, Amaya consulted him, her trusting eyes searched for his, and she proudly told him that one time when she arrived alone at the Justo Sierra, the young men anxiously asked her: "And isn't Señor Ashby going to come?"

In the end, Ashby took some of the Committee members home in his Mercedes as they went on planning. When he saw the apartments and tenement houses they lived in, he felt ashamed of his mansion on the Paseo de la Reforma. He hoped they would never see it.

Ashby wasn't aware of the risk. Even his accident had not given him a clear vision of the dangers that men are exposed to. However, when he saw the tenement houses and went with Amaya to the countryside, he suddenly realized how fragile life could be. This increased when he took the sound system in the trunk to the Zócalo, accompanied by four students. One of them, Genaro Serratos, asked him to stop at the corner of Lorenzo Boturini:

—I have to make an urgent call, I'll be right back.

Twenty five minutes went by and there was no sight of him. Ashby started the car. Three blocks later Raúl Vélez told him that he needed to speak with a friend, so if he could please stop and let him out, and when he opened the car door, his co-pilot also quickly got out, a chubby guy who hadn't opened his mouth. When Ashby was left all alone, he realized the true meaning of the word fear. In fact, the Zócalo was full of riot police and the meeting didn't start for another four hours. When the Mercedes Benz made its entrance, many students came closer to greet him: "Ashby, Ashby" and that consoled him a bit about the deserters. His heart beat very hard when he saw Amaya with a paintbrush and red paint in her hand, filling in the recently traced slogans: "Death to those who deprive the people of food." This woman really made him come out of his shell.

The sound equipment worked, and the meeting was a success. Around three thousand people showed up, the majority of them students. At night, when he accompanied Amaya to her Chrysler, parked in Luis González Obregón, they found the windshield and windows broken, and the word "Whore" ferociously repeated on the doors and the hood. Amaya's only comment was:

—The thing about the whore doesn't bother me, but what on earth am I going to tell Alfonso?

Ashby suggested she take the car to her repair shop and that he drop Amaya off at her house. Already very late in the night, after opening the door, Amaya started to run like a little girl, and went up the stairs four at a time while she shouted to Ashby "Follow me". He had his reward, and it didn't bother him that at six o'clock in the morning Amaya told him to get up and leave. From then on the conferences with the students would culminate in Amaya's hair, scattered on the pillow, and in her dark eyes, as they suddenly took on the color of dark syrup dripping from the bruised bark of maple trees.

9

Ashby dedicated himself completely to Amaya and her concerns. Every time he read something in the news about a land seizure, it would occur to him like a flash of lightning: "Amaya is there"; if a reprieve was secured for tenants faced with the threat of a violent eviction: "Amaya must be behind that". Surely she pointed to the lands that the gate crashers could settle in, because that's the way she was, someone who redistributes the property of others. Ashby could recognize the acts his lover was involved in with his eyes closed. "Who do you think I am, wonderwoman?", Amaya laughed uproariously, when he told her he was sure she had traveled to the state of Hidalgo, when he read in *El Universal*: "Tension in the Valley of the Mezquital, men armed with clubs, machetes, mattocks, and iron bars demanded the eviction of …" With his heart in his throat, Ashby lifted the telephone receiver to dial. It was because of Amaya that he discovered the indigenous peoples of Milpa Alta and Tláhuac were living in subhuman conditions, because of her that he learned of a man burned alive in Chicalachapa, because, according to three campesinos, a squad of soldiers tried to take him away, and he resisted them.

The word "sin" continually appeared in Amaya's vocabulary—"social sin", "sin of omission", "sin of arrogance", "unforgivable sin", "mortal sin", and "venial sin". One evening, Amaya declared to everyone that she was a supporter of the monarchy, and that any sovereign, in accordance with God's will, had to be better than the most extraordinary democratically elected president. "The people don't know how to choose, they weren't meant for that." For her, the French Revolution had been a massacre and the Mexican a revolt that killed one million men, although she adored Zapata. As for the Russian Revolution, she was fascinated by the destiny of the Czar's daughter, Anastasia, and she talked a lot more about her than about Lenin. Of Stalin she would say: "He's a monster, he's repugnant". Her conversations were challenges, and when someone asked her about the danger of her adventures, she peppered her diatribes with "When the going gets tough, the tough get going". Strangely enough, at that same time she used slightly archaic words like "rogue", "nosy parker", and "scoundrel", she talked about tubers, and not potatoes, about herbaceous plants instead of spinach, of mercies and not of favors: "For mercy's sake, don't be such a creep".

Now that he was supporting her, Ashby clearly realized that Amaya and her apparent sweetness got mixed up in every mess you could possibly imagine. In the cellar of her house, and in spite of Alfonso, for days she kept a chest that a campesino[112] leader who was, "very handsome and who had a very poetic last name" entrusted her with, and only when he came to pick it up did she realize what was inside of it: rifles. Ashby, terrified, asked why she had let him in, and she simply exclaimed:

—He's an Adonis, I couldn't deny him anything. I am powerless in the face of beauty.

Ashby was even more disconcerted to learn that, after having hid his chest, the handsome leader Leonardo Cienfuegos asked her to hide him.

—And where did you hide him, Amaya?—asked Ashby, warily.

—We arranged a cot for him in the cellar.

If Alfonso was never present, it was plausible that he never found out that his wife was harboring a guerilla. Nevertheless, everything around Amaya was temporary, elusive, and even deceitful. Once, seated beside him on the highway to Cuernavaca, Amaya asked him to stop the car next to a spring:

—Ashby, don't you see what I see?

—What, Güerita?

—That woman all dressed in white on the other side of the spring.

—I don't see anything. Which one?

—Watch her, she has a fixed look in her big baggy eyes, look at her, she's staring at us.

—I'm sorry Amaya darling, but don't you think you've been reading too many horror stories lately?

The same thing happened one evening in the luxury suite of "Las mañanitas". Amaya woke him up in the middle of the night.

—There's a man over there who keeps staring at us.

—Where?

—Behind the curtain. He's a very tall man dressed in a tailcoat.

Ashby turned on the light and went to check it out.

—There's nobody there. You must have fallen in love with the waiter that served us the Crêpes Suzette!

Amaya went from terror to animation.

—What a handsome man! Don't you agree? I'm sure that man wants to take me with him. Some very subtle signs led me to believe that he wants me to meet up with him somewhere.

—Where?

—Perhaps in Germany, that gentleman is a Hapsburg.

Ashby had never before experienced it, but for the first time in his life he was gripped by jealousy when Amaya told him, most naturally, that the deposed Prince Marsilio de Saboya had been sleeping in her house for two weeks and showed no sign of leaving.

Between one blow and another, Amaya would disappear without a trace, and without saying goodbye.

Ashby dialed his love's number and, to his surprise, a clear voice responded, giving him precise information:

—The Señora left for the north five days ago, for Monclova.

—Oh my God!—was all that Ashby could exclaim.

In Monclova, some starving people had assaulted a train loaded with beans. They raised a heavy barricade with stones and sticks on the rails to block its way, and the engineer had to use the emergency brakes. He had hardly applied the brakes when the stones hailed down upon the locomotive, and four men, who apparently knew something about engines, closed the valves and brought it to a complete stop. Meanwhile, the assailants opened the wagons and freight cars. They were already prepared with shovels and carts, sacks, bags, pans, whatever they had. Men, women, children and elderly folks, they all looted the freight cars.

The children, delighted, used the heap of beans as a slide while their parents ran with the treasure in wheelbarrows. Ashby visualized Amaya, the author of the assault, standing beside the rails, urging them on, her blond hair forming a halo: run, don't waste time, hurry up, hurry up, don't be stupid".

All this went on until the police force arrived with their wailing sirens, and, like the train, was the target of a volley of stones.

In spite of the hail of stones, the police didn't discriminate in whom they arrested, and took them all off to jail.

—Don't you see? What purpose did the damned Revolution serve?— complained Amaya when she returned.

Yes, of course, she participated in the assault on the train; yes, of course, she helped to fill the sacks with beans; yes, yes, they didn't do anything to her, although she asked them to take her away as well. "No, Señora, not you, what a suggestion!" She returned to Mexico City in the white Chrysler with a young man who was now sleeping in the doorman's quarters. But things weren't going to stay that way, that's for sure. She would return to the north and get them all out of jail.

—I'm going to ask you to come with me, I need a man.

—I'm at your service, your wish is my command.

Ashby practically no longer lived in his house.

Holed up in the library, he would go up to the bedroom like a masked thief, and one night, when she turned on the lamp and gave him a look of desperation, he couldn't bear the idea that Nora might start with a list of grievances against him at that moment, and he went to sleep in another of the large bedrooms. From that moment on, he never again returned to the marriage bed. He went from there to his dressing room, took out jackets and shirts, handkerchiefs, and his most comfortable slip-ons in case he had to make an untimely departure for some battlefield in the countryside. In that way, without even discussing it, Ashby and Nora took separate rooms.

Amaya had completely invaded Ashby. He only thought about her. Neither did he see his sons, and he didn't miss them either. Sometimes he heard them running in the corridor, or laughing in the garden. He didn't need physical contact, he carried them inside of himself, their faces and their mannerisms imprinted in his soul.

One afternoon, Nora, all dressed in black, quietly opened the library door and said:

—I need to speak with you.

With his habitual courtesy, Ashby offered her a chair.

—I would prefer to go to the living room.

—Wherever you like.

In the living room, standing next to the chimney, one hand on the other, Nora's figure possessed a quiet dignity. Looking him in the eyes, she made a visible effort to ask:

—How long are we going to continue like this, how far do you want this to go? The best thing is for you to leave. I'm going to petition for a divorce.

—A divorce?

—Yes, a divorce.

For Ashby, the news seemed to come out of nowhere. In the last three months or three years or three hundred years, Nora never had made a scene nor had she complained, nothing, except for that desperate look he buried by going to another bedroom. Nora was his wife, his possession, the mother of his sons, the mistress of the house, his girlfriend, his copilot, his partner, his useful, practical, efficient companion, the guarantor of the smooth running of the home, the one who greased the gears. Just last Saturday she had splendidly received their guests.

—Nora, what's the matter?

—I'd like you to go live somewhere else and look for an apartment or return to your house on the Paseo de la Reforma.

Stupefied, Ashby only managed to ask:

—Why?

—I want you to leave.

—You don't want to see me anymore?

—We never see each other. Or haven't you realized?

—Please Nora, give me an explanation.

—I've thought a lot about it, I think that it's the best for everyone. You never see the children, you don't miss a single one of us. Your life is no longer here.

—But Nora, we'll talk about it, I never expected this.

Ashby held out his hand and made as if to pull her towards the sofa. Very pale, she rejected him:

—Let's not make tasteless scenes, I hate them. I said what I needed to say. I hope that tomorrow you'll no longer be here.

Stunned, he watched her walk towards the door, proudly holding her head up stiffly. How thin she was! The black converted her into a tragic figure. He never thought that his wife had it in her. A moment later he followed her out, and in his library he reconstructed the brief conversation. Nora hadn't mentioned Amaya a single time. Just as he and Amaya always ignored her, Nora allowed herself the luxury of not uttering her name. The look of pain on her face affected him. Something very grave must have happened to her, never before had she looked at him like that, from the bottom of an abyss which he couldn't reach. Ashby would somehow get another meeting with her. Perhaps his wife would reconsider her decision, but her face was too full of tragedy for her words not to be final. How was it possible that he had never before seen such depth of character in the black of her eyes? He was discovering her. He didn't want to lose her. He would get her back. Ashby didn't think at all about Amaya. When he heard a car motor and a violent slam, he left the library. The servant announced:

—From the Señora.

He gave him an unaddressed white envelope on the silver tray. Inside, on a sheet of paper, with handwriting befitting a former student of the Sacred Heart, Nora had written:

"I'm going to the countryside with the children. I hope that I will not find you here when we return. Please, take your things. I don't want to see you again except in court."

So, she had it all planned out already? To let him know her decision and hurry off? Ashby returned to the library. He couldn't stay in the house on Puebla Street. It would remind him too much of her. Most of the furniture and everything was hers, except the paintings. They had a joint account in the bank. Soon the stabbing desire to see his sons filled his eyes with tears. He decided to go out to look for an apartment and he took the first one he visited, almost without looking at it. He ordered the servant to pack suits and shoes. It wasn't that he wanted to obey Nora to the letter of the law, but rather, that he didn't know what to do with himself. It would have been good to speak with Santiago Creel, but he was in Europe. Who could he turn to? Who knew how his new intellectual friends would react. He had to wait for his encounter with Amaya that evening.

When he told her about it, seated in the semi-darkness in front of the roaring fire in the living room fireplace, Amaya eased his agitation with an enormous indifference:

—I don't want to hear about it anymore. Personal problems don't interest me, much less those of the bourgeoisie.

—But you, Amaya…

—I don't have anything to do with it, absolutely nothing. And I advise you to not wear yourself down with these types of conflicts that lead nowhere.

For a second, the thought that Amaya was a bitch crossed Ashby's mind. Or Nora. No, not Nora. Amaya always seemed to look towards an indefinite point that only she could see. That's how she confronted any situation. Her intensity burned everything. That's why she liked to stoke the fire, stirring up flames that suddenly wiped out the shadows. The bright red burning logs were her nourishment. Nora, on the other hand, obeyed the canons and followed love-making techniques to the letter of the law. Good daughter, good wife, good mother; his life at her side unfolded without accidents.

Ashby had never experienced such a sense of loss. Now that he didn't have them, he missed his sons, and he thought he saw them in other children in the street. He longed for their laughter and their running around, their "Good day, daddy", "Good-bye, daddy", and the horseback riding class that he drove them to twice a week. His older son, Rodrigo, followed in his footsteps and thought about horses 24 hours a day, which in his opinion should be spent in the saddle. The other son, Alvin, didn't, but instead was an excellent tennis player. "They have it in their blood", they said to him in the Club, and this would fill him with pride. Ashby III used to ride a five-year old purebred with an extraordinary future. His father taught him to concentrate before entering the track and liked to see him with his eyes squinting, oblivious to the ruckus around him, his head down, controlling "Lancelot" and his own emotions. He was sure they were asking for him, that they were looking for him in the grandstands of the riding school. They missed his: "Lower your heels", "restrain him, nice and gentle, nice and gentle, feel the horse's rhythm", "Alvin, for God's sake haven't you realized that you're riding all wrong? Do like Rodrigo, follow the movement of the horse, feel him, feel him". The horseback riding brought them closer together. Many nights he drove his car just to pass by the front of his house and see the turned on light on the second floor and imagine them in their pajamas before laying their heads on the pillow. He had to resist the temptation to knock on the door. Nora would probably say to him: "What are you doing in *my* house?"

The panorama was bleak in the furnished apartment, and Ashby let himself go. The last thing on his mind was his medicines or the obligatory cream for his scars. He couldn't care less if his unwashed shirts were piling up or if the food was going bad in his refrigerator—the liter of milk, the carton of eggs, the butter, the "give me 250 grams of ham" that bachelors order. He had never been surrounded by so much ugliness; now the green-pea colored carpet made him sick, the big pieces of furniture were closing in on him, giant tortoises between the ashtrays filled with cigarette butts. Everything cried out for help. When the door of the refrigerator opened it was almost a coffin inviting him to stick his head in it, and so was the oven. Sylvia Plath was calling him from inside. Frozen head, burnt head, *tête de cochon*, pig head.

He remembered a night when Nora, upon hearing him say: "I'm dying of hunger", went downstairs with him to the kitchen and prepared him a delicious *sandwich*. A bottle of red wine, two glasses, the white kitchen, Nora, her hair loose, her body divided in two by the tightly tied belt of her housecoat. Nora, his Nora, his wife, repeated the classic line from the comic strips: "I'm your Blondie, you're my Dagwood", a slice of bread, a slice of tomato, a leaf of lettuce, Dijon mustard or mayonnaise? Roast beef, another tomato, another slice of bread and… they opened their mouths simultaneously:

—Nora, I've never eaten anything so delicious.

—Nor have I. Neither have I seen you open your jaws as wide as a caiman—she laughed.

—That's the first colloquial expression I've heard from you, Nora.

—And not the last.

Happy, face to face, they felt so in love with each other. With surprise Ashby now remembered that Nora knew exactly where everything was in the refrigerator: How did she know that if she had a cook, a kitchen helper, a servant, an assistant? How, if she seemed so disdainful in her distracted arrogance? He was sure that the domestics loved her, although she maintained her distance from them. Something about her had eluded him. What was it? Nora did things without him realizing it. She was one of those beings who invade everything by not invading anything, and now Ashby dreamed of seeing her shadow in the large empty room or feeling that soon she would come out from behind the bathroom door to flood him with her sweetness, with that clock-like efficiency that made him lift his arms and cross his hands to invoke her for his reprimand: "Queen of the home, protect us, Our Lady. Empress of daily life, pray for us. Provider. Solid woman. Mainstay of mainstays, Our Lady of diapers and the tepid baby bottle, don't take your sight off of us". What he wouldn't give now for a gram of Nora's good sense. She did everything with her smiling eyes searching for his, and waiting for the approval that he always denied her.

He caught himself saying out loud: "She really loves me".

Amaya, does she love me? No, Amaya wasn't the sort of woman who loves.

One evening when he dared to confide his desperation to Amaya, she, with her extremely sweet voice, told him that he had to think that all the world's children were his sons, although they weren't horsemen. "Remember Little Plato." There was a trace of irony in her words. It was obvious that Amaya was incapable of feeling sorry for him, and that, if he brought up the subject one more time, she would respond with disdain: "What you are saying to me are sentimentalities".

He even missed their dog, a blue-eyed Siberian huskie, "Wolf," who grew up along with his sons, and the street cat, "Gazpacho",[113] that they picked up one rainy afternoon. He never realized that they were part of him. He had taken some of his books with him, but the library had been left behind. His subconscious had made him leave everything, surely with the hope of returning, but for Nora there was no possible reconciliation. Amaya called him urgently only when she needed him. "An oil well exploded in Campeche because of criminal negligence on the part of Pemex,[114] whose directors pocket the money. There were fifty deaths. I'm leaving for there because the union dissidents spoke to me. They're going to organize a big protest march. Would you accompany me, Ashby dear?

During the trip, Amaya spoke of nothing else, and Ashby ended up catching the fever, his head filling with barrels of light crude, with percentages and national production. All the country's petroleum complexes were more important than his own complexes. These were obsolete, as Heberto Castillo declared; he, Egbert was also obsolete, by clinging to tradition, family, and his childhood values. The lack of maintenance in the pipes was his own lack of maintenance, the idleness of his days before he met Amaya. He had to read, to think, to act. The neglect in the natural gas processing plants caused a brutal rise in accidents. Ashby knew all too well about accidents; he had experienced them with every ounce of flesh in his body, he had even burned like an oil well, but he soon forgot his lesson and stopped living dangerously. He became conformist again. Pemex was a time bomb, Ashby had to transform himself into a time bomb, to act against the clock, and to stop living like he had until now, ensconced in absurd rules of etiquette, highballs, and clichés.

Amaya seemed to know everything about Mexican petroleum, and her ardor made her as eloquent as that time when he saw her in the governor's office in Morelos.

—It's a sure thing that other explosions are going to follow in the rest of the country: in Chiapas, Tabasco, Poza Rica, in the Minatitlán plants, in Pajaritos, in the Pacific, and not only that, the gas distribution systems in Mexico put the cities in danger because it's easy for a pipeline to explode. We're all going to be sent flying! Meanwhile, Pemex's administrators don't have mothers. They pocket the money with the total impunity. Are you familiar with Ramírez Estrada's private collection? He even has a Van Gogh, and a little while back he bought a dozen Riveras. Tell me, why are thieves so crazy about art? I'm told that Diego Rivera is going to paint a mural in Sansores Cordera's private house in Cuernavaca. Can you think of anything more disgusting?

"She knows too much", thought Ashby, overwhelmed. She expertly managed facts about ecology, acid rain, the contamination of the rivers, and the harm to agricultural production. She knew everything about the most humble workers, those that put their lives on the line in exchange for nothing from the powerful union which had sold itself to the company, which was as much of a threat to them as the conditions they lived in.

—They are like fuel. If a decent leader comes and ignites the spark, it could turn out to be dangerous for the company. We can only hope. That's why I'm with the people from the independent union who have contacted me. If you knew the women and children who now live in the oily mud of a nauseating marsh you would be horrified at such an injustice.

Ashby listened to her, amazed. How trivial his own insignificant life was in comparison with the great national problems. Ashby let himself be caught up in it all, and Amaya was the key to his salvation.

One unbearable day, when the memory of his sons physically gripped his heart, Ashby decided to go to the Equine Club, in spite of Nora's prohibition. His sons ran to him: "Daddy, daddy". Feeling their sweet-smelling faces next to his own, their arms around his neck, made everything vanish: his loneliness, Amaya, Nora, and his stupid day. Ashby took off their riding helmets to get a better look at their little faces. Alvin had very clear blue eyes, Rodrigo's were a dark coffee and in both gazes, Ashby read an incredibly beautiful faith in him. That faith made him return to his apartment, thinking that not all was lost, that the children, simply because they were children, would save the situation. Such a certainty struck him like a bolt of lightning, and produced an extraordinary effect on him; In the following days Ashby quivered with a sense of duty that he had never known before, one that he would fulfill when he took care of his sons and of Nora.

---

[1] As far as I have been able to ascertain, isodine is a diluted form of iodine, and is widely used in Latin America.

[2] "Obrero" means "working class", so this is a hospital which by its very name is intended for use by the lower economic classes of Mexico.

[3] (1480? - 1520). Moctezuma II was the ruler of the Aztec Empire when the Spanish Conquistadors invaded the country. It is believed that he thought Hernán Cortés was the Aztec god Quetzalcoatl, and he lavished him with gifts upon his arrival.

[4] This is my own translation from the *Nosotros los pobres* Poniatowska mentions in the novel. This is a Mexican movie released in 1947 and directed by Ismael Rodríguez.

[5] A very famous book by Mariano Azuela (1873 - 1952), a Mexican novelist whose works chronicle the events of the Mexican Revolution. *Los de abajo* (1915), translated as *The Underdogs*, is his best-known work. He wrote it while serving as an army doctor in the forces of the revolutionary leader Francisco Villa (Pancho Villa) and finished it while in exile in Texas. It is about a group of guerrilla soldiers in central Mexico between 1913-1915, and recounts their formation, rise, and fall.

[6] "Las Lomas de Chapultepec" is one of the most prestigious neighborhoods in Mexico City.

[7] An indigenous Mexican group that lives in the southern part of the state of Sonora, along the Yaqui River, as well as in the urban areas of that region.

[8] (1495? - 1525) The last ruler of the Aztecs and the nephew of Moctezuma II (see note 3). He led the opposition to Moctezuma's policy of appeasing the Spanish invaders and organized the attack known as the "Noche Triste". He succeeded in defending the Aztec capital of Tenochtitlán throughout the Spring and Summer of 1521, but was finally captured by the Spaniards. They tortured him on a grill in an attempt to find out the location of the Aztec gold. He was eventually killed by the Spaniards.

[9] The Paseo de la Reforma is Mexico City's main boulevard. It runs southwest from the Alameda Central down through to Chapultepec Forest. It is believed that Emperor Maximilian of Hapsburg laid out the boulevard to connect his palace on Chapultepec Hill with the older section of the city. Many of Mexico City's most prestigious neighborhoods lie along this grand avenue which is lined by a double row of ahuehuete trees, and by statues that represent many of Mexico's most important historical moments and figures. Some of these statues honor the heroes of the Wars of Independence (1810 - 1821), and those who battled for a secular state in the 1850's and 1860's.

[10] A famous market in Mexico City, about one kilometer southeast of the Zócalo (the main public square in Mexico City). It covers approximately four city blocks. It is one of the biggest markets in all of the Americas and is over 400 years old.

[11] This region in the Sierra Madre Mountains is often called Zacatlán de las manzanas (literally Zacatlán of the apples) because of its apple orchards, as well as its plums, pears, and other produce.

[12] The original Spanish text said that the guests were bent over their "godorromos achafaldranados". Despite my many efforts to find the meaning of these two words, I have been unsuccessful. Several Mexicans have told me they think these words are invented. I have

---

contacted Elena Poniatowska in a last attempt to ascertain the meaning of these words, but she has not yet responded to my inquiry.

[13] A Mexican daily newspaper founded March 18, 1917. Its daily distribution is approximately 180,000 copies, most of which are sold in Central Mexico.

[14] A beautiful castle in Mexico's famous Chapultepec Park. It was built in 1785 as a residence for the viceroys of New Spain. In 1843 it became the home of the military academy and was later used by the Emperor Maximilian and his wife Charlotte as their residence when they came to Mexico in 1864 (see note 15). After Maximilian's demise, it was used as a residence for Mexico's presidents until 1940, when it was designated as the home of the National Museum of History by Lázaro Cárdenas.

[15] A Reference to Ferdinand Maximilian Von Hapsburg (1832 - 1867), the brother of Austrian Emperor Francis Joseph. He ruled as Emperor of Mexico from 1864-1867. He was installed as emperor by the occupying French forces under Napoleon III, and when the French left in 1867, Maximilian refused to go, believing that he had the support of the Mexican people. Benito Juarez's Republican forces captured and executed him by firing squad on June 19, 1867. His wife Charlotte (1840-1927) was the daughter of King Leopold I of Belgium and Princess Marie Louise of Orleáns.

[16] The Sabines were a tribe who lived in central Italy, mainly in the Apennines northeast of Rome. They were conquered by the Romans around 290 B.C.

[17] This refers to the bare-breasted Angel clutching a laurel wreath and a broken chain that stands on top of the Independence Monument on the Paseo de la Reforma (see note 9). The statue was designed by the sculptor Antonio Rivas Mercado and was erected in 1910.

[18] Carlos IV (1748 - 1819), king of Spain. An equestrian statue of him was erected in the Zócalo in 1803. After independence from Spain was achieved, it was moved to the National University in 1822, and in 1852 was relocated to the Paseo de la Reforma (see note 9). It is currently in Tacuba Street, facing the Palacio de Minería (the Mining Palace, a building that currently houses UNAM's Faculty of Engineering).

[19] A type of tree which originated in North America and has wood similar to that of the cypress tree.

[20] (1773 - 1832) Famous Mexican insurgent leader during the Wars of Independence (see note 23). He was the first leader to establish an independent government on Mexican soil.

[21] A reference to José María Morelos (1765 - 1815), the Mexican priest who took over as leader of the independence movement after Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla was executed. He was captured by Royalist forces in November of 1815. He was then convicted of heresy, defrocked by the Inquisition, and executed.

[22] (1762 - 1814) Famous Mexican general who fought in the South during the Wars of Independence (see note 23).

[23] The wars for Mexico's independence from Spain took place from 1810-1821. The Mexicans were inspired by both the French Revolution and the American War of Independence. Eventually, Agustín de Iturbide, the creole general who was fighting for the Royalist forces, forged an alliance with Vicente Guerrero, the leader of the independence fighters, and they approved the Plan of Iguala, calling for independence from Spain. On September 27, 1821, independence from Spain was declared. It is estimated that about 600,000 Mexicans died in the struggle.

---

[24] (1786 - 1843) Famous Mexican general and first president of Mexico (1824 - 29). He fought in the Wars of Independence (see note 23) alongside Morelos (see note 21), giving himself the name Guadalupe Victoria. Factional strife between the Conservatives and the Liberals marred his administration, and the Conservatives, under Vice-President Bravo, started an unsuccessful revolt. He was succeeded by Vicente Guerrero.

[25] The patron saint of Mexico and a very important symbol of Mexican religious and cultural identity. She represents everything holy, pure, virtuous, and good to its people. On December 12th, most Mexicans celebrate her in a candle-lit ceremony where women and men walk for miles down stone paved roads on their knees in prayer.

[26] (1829 - 1869) Mexican journalist and politician. He was a proponent of the Ley Lerdo, a controversial law forcing the church to sell its real estate in Mexico. Later on he advocated the confiscation of all clerical property because the church had been disloyal to the nation during the Rebellion of the Polkos in 1847 and the French Intervention after 1861.

[27] (1806 - 1872) A national hero in Mexico and president from 1861-1863 and 1867-1872. He was of Native American descent and initiated many sweeping reforms, including the reduction of the power of the Roman Catholic Church in Mexico by confiscating its property. He is regarded as one of the greatest heroes in Mexican History.

[28] (1818 - 1879) Mexican journalist and cabinet minister. He started publishing a satirical journal called *Don Simplicio* under the pseudonym "el Nigromante" (The Necromancer). In this journal he criticized the wealthy class of Mexico and the church. Though a very prominent atheist, he opposed the Ley Lerdo (see note 26), on the grounds that, if implemented, it would make property available only to the middle and wealthy classes.

[29] (1765 - 1827) Famous Mexican priest who was an active participant in the Wars of Independence (see note 23). He was imprisoned and exiled many times for his political and religious beliefs, and was persecuted by the Inquisition.

[30] (1787 - 1851) Mexican political theorist and statesmen regarded as having helped lay the groundwork for many of Mexico's 19th century liberal reforms. He fought in the Wars of Independence (see note 23) and played important roles in several governments.

[31] (1812 - 1861) President of Mexico in 1852. He issued the law known as the Ley Lerdo (see note 26) He was well-known for his anti-clericalism, and in 1859 threatened to resign unless the liberal government issued a decree nationalizing all church property, suppressing religious orders, and separating the church and state. It is believed that he wanted to use the church property as collateral for a loan from the United States to fund the Liberal government in their war against the Conservatives.

[32] (1821 - 1860) Mexican soldier who fought in the War of Reform (see note 35).

[33] (1820 - 1886) Mexican soldier and politician. He fought against Maximilian (see note 15) and the French Intervention.

[34] (1819 - 1886) Important figure in Mexico's medical history. He was the founder of the Academia Nacional de Medicina (National Academy of Medicine), and professor/director of the Escuela de Medicina (School of Medicine).

[35] (1858 - 1861) A war between the Liberals, who were based in Veracruz, and the Conservatives, who were based in Mexico City. The Liberals eventually triumphed and Benito Juárez (see note 27) became president in 1861.

---

[36] (1811 - 1863) Mexican politician and cabinet minister. He is known as the "Father of the Constitution of 1857". He was an ardent federalist and a radical liberal, and one of the main authors of the Constitution of 1857.

[37] (1832 - 1876) Illustrious Republican army general.

[38] A white marble concert hall and arts centre which was commissioned by President Porfirio Díaz. Construction first began in 1904 under an Italian architect, Adamo Boari, who favored neo-classical and art nouveau styles. It was supposed to be finished by 1910 for the centennial celebration of Mexico's independence, but the Revolution delayed its completion until 1934.

[39] (1897 - 1977) Distinguished Mexican poet who had an enormous influence on the intellectuals of his own and succeeding generations. He also wrote prose, often about literature and art. He was an active participant in political and humanitarian causes and was imprisoned for political reasons in the 1930's, but was later freed. He then became a professor of Spanish-American literature at the Escuela Nacional Preparatoria (National preparatory School), where Octavio Paz was one of his students. Later important positions include head of the Department of Literature and Fine Arts (1941), professor in the Faculty of Arts at the National Autonomous University of Mexico (1948), founder of the Museo Arqueológico de Villahermosa (Villahermosa Archeological Museum), the Casa Azul Museo (a museum about Frida Kahlo), the Anahuacalli Museum (museum about Diego Rivera in Mexico City), the Museum of Parque de la Venta, and the Museum of Tepoztlán, among others. He joined the Mexican Academy of Language in 1953 and was awarded the National Literary Prize in 1964. He became a senator for the State of Tabasco in 1976, died in 1977, and was buried in the Rotunda of Illustrious Men.

[40] A late 16th century cathedral on the Alameda in Mexico City.

[41] Mexican daily founded in 1936 during the administration of Lázaro Cárdenas. It is known for its liberal tendencies and has a daily readership of approximately 120,000.

[42] Mexican daily founded October 1, 1916. It was shut down during the government of General Obregón because of its opposition to his government, and was later reinstated.

[43] Prestigious housing development, begun in 1902, along the Paseo de la Reforma (see note 9).

[44] Famous department store in Mexico City which sells clothing, furniture, novelties, and house items in general. It opened for business in 1868.

[45] (1900 - 1969) Spanish-Mexican philosopher. He was mostly concerned with the radical historicity of philosophy—the extent to which a philosophy is rooted in the thinker's historical circumstances. He was an ardent supporter of the Republican cause in Spain and was named rector of the University of Madrid in 1936. Soon afterwards he had to flee Franco's regime, first living in Cuba, and later moving to Mexico. He called himself a transterrado (transplant) instead of an exile. He spent the rest of his life researching the history of thought in Latin America. He taught in the Colegio de México as well as UNAM, and was a major influence on that generation of major Mexican thinkers.

[46] A building constructed in 1766 which often houses exhibitions and lectures.

[47] Spanish philosopher who had to go into exile for political reasons, and whose works examine the relationship between literature and philosophy.

[48] (1899 - 1963) Spanish priest who supporterd the Republicans and who emigrated to Mexico in 1939.

---

[49] (1907 - 1990) Spanish philosopher from Barcelona. He was forced to go into exile because of his Republican views and first went to France and later to Mexico in 1939, where he resided until his death. He was a well respected professor at UNAM in the Faculty of Arts.

[50] (1884 - 1968) Spanish poet. He moved from Spain to Mexico in 1938 and lived there until his death. There he wrote many of his most famous works: *Español del Éxodo y del llanto*, *Llamadme publicano*, *Ganarás la Luz*, *Israel*, and *El Ciervo* y *Rocinante*. There is a statue of him in Chapultepec Forest.

[51] (1903 – 1976) A Spanish poet who went into exile in Mexico because of the Civil War. He lived there until his death. Some of his better known works include *Fidelidad del sueño* (1943), *El Genil y los olivos* (1944), *El oscuro límite* (1948), *Noche adentro* (1949), and *Cantar del vencido* (1954). Some of his better known prose works include *La esfinge mestiza: crónica menor de México* (1943) and *El poeta y su pueblo: homenaje a F. García Lorca* (1974).

[52] (1887 - 1976) Mexican novelist and journalist. He was a member of the Athenaeum of Youth (see note 79), where he became friends with Alfonso Reyes (see note 63), José Vasconcelos (see note 81), and Pedro Henríquez Ureña. He was a member of the staff of General Álvaro Obregón (see note 59) and served under General Francisco "Pancho" Villa. Some of his best known works are *El águila y la serpiente* (1928), *Memorias de Pancho Villa* (1951), and *La sombra del caudillo* (1929), translated as *The Leader's Shadow*, a historical novel inspired by the Mexican Revolution which has achieved widespread recognition. He was awarded the National Literary Prize in 1958.

[53] Mexican daily founded May 27, 1929 by the Partido Nacional Revolucionario (National Revolutionary Party). It now is governed by a government agency. Today it has an approximate daily readership of 600,000.

[54] (1903 -1986) Mexican writer whose works often examine social problems. He started writing for *El Machete*, the magazine of the Mexican Communist Party, and later for the journal of the Liga de Escritores y Artistas Revolucionarios (League of Revolutionary Artists and Writers), of which he was the founder. Some of his better known works include *Paseo de mentiras* (1940), *Incidentes melódicos del mundo irracional* (1944), the screenplay for the movie *El brazo fuerte*, and the theatre work *La Guarandcha* (1970), as well as three books published in 1981: *La tierra en cuatro tiempos*, *Pasados por agua*, and *El duende*.

[55] Most likely a reference to Pedro and Rafael Coronel, both artists. Pedro (1923 - 1985) was a painter and sculptor who lived for a time in Europe, where he met Marcel Breuer and Constantin Brancusi. He exhibited his work in Mexico and internationally. Rafael (1932 -), a painter whose style is reminiscent of Goya and José Clemente Orozco, has also received worldwide recognition. In 1964 he painted two murals in the Museo Nacional de Antropología (National Museum of Anthropology).

[56] (1914 - 1976) Mexican journalist, film critic, prose writer, essayist, politician, and well-known leftist figure in Mexico. He joined the Mexican Communist Party as a young man, from which he was later expelled. He then founded the Partido Popular Socialista (The Popular Socialist Party), but later distanced himself from it. After that he founded the Liga Comunista Espartaco (Communist Espartic League), an organization with a Leninist affiliation and an anti-Stalinist position. He was imprisoned several times for his political activities.

[57] (1918 - 1963) Mexican writer and philosopher. One of his better known works is *Fenomenología del relajo* (1966), a collection of essays.

[58] (1897 - 1971) Famous Mexican painter who studied in Paris where he met Matisse, Braque, Picasso, and other famous artists. He has had exhibitions all over the world and is considered to be

---

one of Mexico's greatest painters, along with Siqueiros, Rivera (see note 91), Orozco, Tamaya, and Montenegro.

[59] (1880 - 1928) Mexican soldier and president (1920 - 1924). He instituted a number of labor, agrarian, and educational reforms, and in 1923 he secured the formal recognition of his government by the United States. He was reelected in 1928 but was assassinated before he could take office.

[60] (1918 -) Mexican poet who, along with José Luis Martínez, Leopoldo Zea, and Jorge González Durán, is one of the writers who contributed to the literary journal *Tierra Nueva* (1940-1942). He is the co-founder of the supplement "México en la Cultura" (Mexico in Culture) and is a member of the Academia Mexicana de la Lengua (Mexican Academy of Language). Some of his better known works include *Páramo en sueños* (1944), *Imágenes desterradas* (1948), *Palabras en reposo* (1956) and an anthology called *Poesía romántica* (1941).

[61] (1904-1974) A Mexican poet, novelist, playwright, essayist, editorialist, and chronicler of Mexico City who wrote professionally in a time when the only way for a Mexican writer to earn a living was by a government appointment as a teacher or bureaucrat. He made a living independent of "government connections" by writing alone. He was known for his biting social and personal commentary and sharp irony. According to the *Encyclopedia of Mexico* he is considered by many to be one of the four most important Mexican poets of the twentieth century, along with José Gorostiza, Carlos Pellicer (see note 39), and Octavio Paz (see note 76). According to the same source, he is also considered by many to be the leading Mexican essayist of the twentieth century. He was the target of attacks throughout his career because of his homosexuality.

[62] (1918 -) Mexican poet and contributor to *Tierra Nueva*. Former Secretary of the Colegio de México, member of the Instituto de Derecho Comparado (Institute of Comparative Law), and the Centro de Estudios Filosóficos de la Falcultad de Filosofía y Letras (Center for Philosophical Studies in the Faculty of Arts). Some of his better known works include two books of poetry, *Estancia en la voz* (1942) and *Primera vigilia terrestre* (1953).

[63] (1889 - 1959) Renowned Mexican writer. He was one of the founders of the Athenaeum of Youth in 1909 (see note 79). In 1945 he was awarded the Mexico's National Literary Prize and was a candidate for the Nobel Prize in Literature. Some of his better known works include: *Visión de Anáhuac* (1917), *Simpatías y diferencias* (1921), *La X en la frente* (1952), *El deslinde* (1944), and *La experiencia literaria* (1942).

[64] (1924 -) Well-known Mexican intellectual who has taught in several educational institutions and is a highly respected critic of Mexican literature. He has written prologues, essays, literary critiques, and articles in literary supplements, especially for *Novedades* and *¡Siempre!*

[65] This was one of the most impressive construction projects undertaken during Miguel Alemán's presidency (1946 - 52). Dedicated in 1954, it was built to house the National Autonomous University of Mexico. At that time, the three-mile square campus was considered one of the most modern in the world. Emminent Mexican artist Juan O'Gorman (see note 98) played an important role in designing the plans. Anthropological and historical murals by such renowned artists as Rivera (see note 91) and Siqueiros can be found on campus.

[66] (1920 -) Mexican painter and sculptor. In the 1950's he was at the head of Mexico's avant-garde movement. He had a major impact on the internationalization of Mexican art, and his own work has been exhibited internationally since the 1970's.

[67] (1917 -) A Spanish poet, essayist, translator and anthologist who has lived in Mexico since 1939. Some of his more well-known works include *La rama viva* (1940), *Pasión primera* (1941), *Romancillero de la fe* (1941), *Los laureles de Oaxaca: notas y poemas de un viaje* (1948), *Jornada*

---

hecha. Poesía: 1934-1952 (1953), *A Don Antonio Machado el cumplir los veinte años de su muerte* (1961), *Elegías y poemas españoles* (1966) and *La rama viva y otros poemas* (1987).

[68] (1897 - 1964) Former editor of the literary journals *Letras de México* and *El hijo pródigo*. Also the author of *Sonetos a la Virgen* and *El Dr. Fu Chan Li*.

[69] Wife of Octavio Barreda. Former director of the Salón de la Plástica Mexicana (1953-1954) and of the Museum of Modern Art (1964-1972).

[70] (1925 - 1974) Famous Mexican writer whose most famous works include *Balún Canán* (1957), and *Oficio de tinieblas* (1962).

[71] Well-known Mexican academic, originally from Italy, whose works cover disciplines as diverse as sociology, psychology, history, and anthropology.

[72] (1903 - 1981) An Italian who moved to Mexico, wrote in Spanish and became a prominent writer there. In addition he is known as a dancer, choreographer, and expert on Mexican popular fiestas and aboriginal dances.

[73] (1929 -) Internationally renowned Mexican artist, whose collages incorporate a lot of three-dimensional effects.

[74] (1903 - 1972) A French born writer who was naturalized as a Spaniard and who wrote in Spanish. He was one of Franco's most bitter enemies and his work was often banned. He was forced to leave Spain because of his Republican sentiments and moved to Mexico in 1942, where he lived until he died. He often wrote about the Civil War. Some of his better known works include *Geografía* (1929), *Fábula verde* (1933), *Luis Álvarez Petreña* (1934), and what is considered to be his most important work, *El laberinto mágico*, a collection of novels. Other works include *Las buenas intenciones* (1954), *Jusep Torres Campalans* (1958), *La calle de Valverde* (1961), and *Juego de cartas* (1964).

[75] (1897 – 1959) Mexican intellectual and writer. Samuel Ramos is considered, along with Octavio Paz, to be an astute observer of the character and soul of Mexico. Both men emphasize the importance of the historical experience as forming the personality of Mexican society. They both believe that Mexico's past and present native peoples, as well as the legacy of Spain's colonization, the Republican Revolutions, and the ever present influence of the United States have had and continue to have a profound effect on Mexico (Chang-Rodríguez 230).

[76] (1914 - 1998) Mexican writer and Nobel Prize laureate. In 1990 he became the first Mexican to receive the Nobel Prize in literature. He worked as a poet, journalist, and as an essayist. He also spent 23 years as a diplomat for Mexico in various countries. He resigned his ambassador's post in 1968 in protest over the massacre of student protesters in the Plaza of Tlatelolco. *The Labyrinth of Solitude* (1950) is one of his most famous works. It is a collection of essays that attempt to explain his relationship to the Mexican way of life, and was written during his diplomatic service.

[77] (1906 -) Mexican writer, director, and screenwriter. He is also an outstanding journalist whose work is primarily about social issues. His novel *El resplandor* was published in 1937, and was translated into English, Italian, Czech, German, and Hebrew. It is about a group of people in a very poor Indian community of *otomíes* (a Mexican indigenous group) before, during, and after the Revolution. The book is considered to be one of the main indigenist novels of Mexico.

[78] A group of Spanish poets that includes Pedro Salinas (1892 - 1951), Gerardo Diego (1896 - 1987), Federico García Lorca (1898 - 1936), Luis Cernuda (1904 - 1963), Jorge Guillén (1898 - 1984), Vicente Aleixandre (1900 - 1984), Dámaso Alfonso (1898) and Rafael Alberti (1902). Most of them participated in a commemorative act in honor of Góngora, celebrated in 1927, from which

---

they got their name. They belong to the period of between wars poets (poetas de entre guerras) in Spain.

[79] The Ateneo de la juventud (Athenaeum of youth) (1907 - 1914), was a Mexican intellectual and literary society that was founded in 1907 under the name Sociedad de Conferencias (Society for Lectures). After 1912 this group was known as the Ateneo de México (Athenaeum of Mexico). Its members included José Vasconselos (see note 81), Alfonso Reyes (see note 63), Nemesio García Naranjo, Isidro Favela, Genaro Fernández, Mac Gregón, Martín Luis Guzmán (see note 52), and other intellectuals. The leaders of the group were Antonio Caso (see note 101) and Pedro Henriquez Ureña. At first the group developed around the short-lived literary Journal *Savia Moderna*, whose contributors tried to go away from modernista writing and French influenced literature. Later the society was more concerned with questioning the philosophy of Positivism which was employed by the Porfirio Díaz government. In their discussions they proposed political, social, and intellectual renovation of Mexican society. This group had an enormous influence during Mexico's post-revolutionary state building decades during the 1920's and 1930's.

[80] (1932 -) Mexican poet, novelist and short story writer. He founded and directed the journal "*S.Nob*". He made the film *Apocalipsis 1900* in 1965, won the Premio Villarrutia (Villarrutia Prize) in 1965, and is a member of the Academia Mexicana de la Lengua (Mexican Academy of Language). Some of his better known works include *Poemas* (1960), *Farabeuf o la crónica de un instante* (1965), *Narda o el verano* (1964), *El hipogeo secreto* (1968), *El retrato de Zoe y otras mentiras* (1969), *El grafógrafo* (1972), *Museo poético* (1974) and *Antología personal* (1974).

[81] (1882 - 1959) Eminent Mexican writer, philosopher, and educator, member of the Athenaeum of Youth (see note 79), and former Rector of the University of Mexico, he served as the Secretary of Public Education during the government of Álvaro Obregón (see note 59). He was forced into exile several times because of his opposition to the ruling regimes. In 1929 he ran as an independent for President of Mexico and became a very popular candidate. It is widely believed that the PRI (see note 107) resorted to electoral fraud to secure victory for their candidate, Pascual Ortiz Rubio (see note 85).

[82] (1920 -) A well-known Mexican prose writer and dramatist. Some of her better known works include *Los recuerdos del porvenir* (1963), *La semana de colores* (1964), *Felipe Ángeles* (1979), *Andamos huyendo Lola* (1980), *Testimonio sobre Mariana* (1981), *Reencuentro de personajes* (1981), *La casa junto al río* (1983), and *Matarazo no llamó* (1991)

[83] (1928 -) Distinguished Mexican writer known for his metaphysical short stories and novels about his homeland, notably, *The Death of Artemio Cruz* (1962). Other important works include *Los días enmascarados* (1954), *La región más transparente* (1958), *Aura* (1962), *Cantar de ciegos* (1965), *Líneas para Adami* (1966), *Zona sagrada* (1967), *Cambio de piel* (1967), *Terra Nostra* (1975), *Gringo Viejo* (1985), *Una familia lejana* (1980), *Agua quemada* (1981), *Cristóbal nonato* (1987), and *La campaña* (1990). He has also written two well-known plays, *El tuerto es rey* (1970), and *Todos los gatos son pardos* (1971).

[84] (1879 - 1919) Mexican revolutionary leader and agrarian reformer. An illiterate tenant farmer of almost pure Native American blood, he recruited an army of Native Americans from villages and haciendas in Morelos and, under the rallying cry "Land and Liberty", joined the Mexican revolutionist Francisco Madero in the 1910 revolt against Porfirio Díaz. He designed an agrarian reform plan known as the Plan of Ayala, which called for the land to be redistributed among the Native Americans. He is considered to be one of Mexico's greatest heroes.

[85] (1877 - 1963) Mexican president from 1930-1932. During his presidency, former president Plutarco Elías Calles remained so powerful behind the scenes that Ortiz Rubio resigned in protest against his lack of presidential sovereignty and authority.

---

[86] Ramón María del Valle-Inclán (1866 - 1936). Spanish novelist, playwright, and poet, whose satirical works criticized the Spanish society of his time. He studied law at the University of Santiago in Galicia but broke off his studies in 1892 to visit Mexico, where he worked as a journalist.

[87] This is an affectionate way of saying Amaya.

[88] The "Seño" used here is to reflect a more "slangish" way of pronouncing "Señora".

[89] The "Blue House", located in Coyoacán, was the house of Frida Kahlo and her husband Diego Rivera from 1929-1954. It is now a museum with their momentos and various articles of folk and prehispanic works of art.

[90] (1907 - 1954) World famous Mexican painter, who was gravely injured at a young age and who mostly produced very personal self-portraits using elements of fantasy and a style inspired by native popular art.

[91] (1886 - 1957) World-renowned Mexican painter who produced murals on social themes, and who ranks as one of his country's greatest artists. He was an active member of the Mexican Communist Party.

[92] The word given in the original text is "pachanga", which is a word with popular origins that denotes specifically an urban party with a common, of the people character.

[93] The original Spanish says precortesiano, or "precortesian", which refers more specifically to the art preceding the Spanish conquistador Hernán Cortés' arrival in Mexico, and not Christopher Columbus' arrival, which is what pre-Columbian refers to.

[94] This is an adjective that has Aztec and popular origins. It refers to the custom of dancers in the Mesa Central who are dressed up elaborately in costumes as elderly people.

[95] Adjective meaning coming from the district of Tehuantepec, in the Mexican State of Oaxaca.

[96] A very popular drink in Mexico made from the paste of the seeds of the chía—a type of sage. The paste is combined with sugar and lemon juice to produce this popular Mexican beverage.

[97] A popular snack in Mexico that is made from a herbaceous plant. They are usually eaten with mole sauce around Christmas or New Years.

[98] (1905 - 1982) Famous Mexican architect, painter, and mosaicist. He designed the UNAM's Central Library where all four walls are covered with his mosaics. He painted a number of murals in a realist style, most of them depicting events in Mexico's history, and often carrying strongly leftist political messages.

[99] (1474 - 1566) A Spanish missionary and historian, known as the "Apostle of the Indians", who was the first to criticize the oppression of Native Americans by their European conquerors. In 1544 Las Casas was made bishop of Chiapas in southern Mexico, and in 1547 he returned to Spain, where he continued to plead the cause of the Native Americans. He died in Madrid on July 31, 1566.

[100] A Mexican film released in 1944. It was directed by Emilio Romo Fernández , "El Indio" (The Indian). He was born in Hondo, Coahuila in 1903, the son of an indigenous mother and a Spanish father. He fought in the Mexican Revolution and was sentenced to 20 years imprisonment, but he escaped to the United States. In the thirties he returned to Mexico to work as an actor and later a director. His films generally depict the misery of the poor in Mexico. His film *María Candelaria*

---

won first prize in the Cannes Festival in 1946. The movie is about a small town woman who was scorned because of her mother's past indiscretions and is about a couple who is ostracized because of their mixed-race relationship. The woman gets malaria, is refused quinine, and in the end the villagers stone her to death.

[101] (1883 - 1946) A Mexican philosopher and writer who was a very influential member of the group Athenaeum of Youth (see note 79). He was one of the most influential and active intellectuals in Mexico in the first half of the twentieth century. Some of his better known works include *Problemas filosóficos* (1915), *La existencia como existencia y como caridad* (1916), *La existencia como economía, como desinterés y como caridad* (1919), *La filosofía de Husser 1* (1934), and *La presencia humana y el estado totalitario* (1941).

[102] A type of edible tuber used in Mexican cooking.

[103] In Mexico the word"güera" is used to refer to a blond woman. "Güerita" is a term of endearment, which can be used for both blond and non-blond women. Since Amaya is in fact blond, I considered translating it as "blondie", but this word has acquired a sexist, patronizing connotation in English, so I felt it would be best to leave it as "Güerita", explaining it in a footnote.

[104] Refers loosely to what we call "peasants" in English. Campesino refers to people who live in the countryside who earn a living with agricultural work.

[105] Spanish has two forms for the singular second person form "you". Tú is used in more informal situations, and with people that one knows well or is on the same or lower social standing as the speaker. Usted is the more respectful form, and is usually used with people one does not know well, or with people who belong to a higher social standing than the speaker, or simply is used to show respect. Up until this point Ashby and Amaya have been treating each other in the more formal usted form, and in the Spanish text, Amaya asks at this point why Ashby does this.

[106] Literally this refers to the governor of a province of ancient Persia. Is used figuratively to describe a person who knows how to govern astutely and intelligently, or who governs despotically, the meaning in this case.

[107] This is a reference to the Partido Revolucionario Institucional (The Institutional Revolutionary Party) that has had a vice grip on Mexican politics since the Mexican Revolution. That is, until the most recent elections in July of 2000, where their candidate lost, and Vicente Fox, the candidate from the Partido de Acción Nacional (The National Action Party) won the presidential race. The PRI has held on to power for so long by resorting to widespread corruption and electoral fraud.

[108] Magazine founded July 27, 1953. With a readership of approximately 70,000, it is read all over Mexico.

[109] Name of a popular Mexican beer.

[110] In the Spring of 1966 there was a massive strike at the National University which resulted in the resignation of the University's president.

[111] This is the auditorium in the Faculty of Arts section of UNAM.

[112] The Spanish original said that he was a "campesino coprero". Despite consulting many native speakers and specialized dictionaries I have not been able to verify the meaning of the adjective. Perhaps it is an adjective deriving from the noun "copra", which would mean that he is a worker engaged in the production of oil from the dried pulp of the coconut.

---

[113] A popular type of Spanish soup which is made of tomatoes, peppers and garlic, and is served cold.

[114] This is the acronym for Petróleos mexicanos (Mexican Petroleum). It is a government-owned enterprise that was established after the expropriation and subsequent nationalization of the Mexican oil industry in 1938 under President Lázaro Cárdenas.

Works Consulted and Cited

The following bibliography includes works by and about Elena Poniatowska, general essays on the Spanish language and translation, as well as sources providing background information on Mexican history and culture.

Álvarez, José Rogelio, ed. *Enciclopedia de México*. Mexico City: Enciclopedia de México, 1974.

Ascencio, Esteban. *Me lo dijo Elena Poniatowska: Su vida, obra y pasiones, contadas por ella misma....* Mexico City: Ediciones del Milenio, 1997.

Chang-Rodríguez, Eugenio. *Latinoamérica: su civilización y cultura*. 2nd ed. Boston: Heinle & Heinle, 1991.

Chevigny, Bell Gale. "The Transformation of Privilege in the Work of Elena Poniatowska." *Latin American Literary Review* 13.26 (1985): 49-62.

Devney, Dorothy M. *Guide to Spanish Suffixes*. Chicago: Passport Books, 1992.

Diccionario Porrúa de historia, biografía y geografía de México. 6th ed. Mexico City: Editorial Porrúa, 1995.

Faber, Sebastiaan. "Can the Female Muse Speak? Chacel and Poniatowska Read Against the Grain." *Rocky Mountain Review of Language and Literature* 53.1 (1991): 47-66.

Flores y Escalante, Jesús. *Moralla del caló mexicano*. Mexico City: Asociación mexicana de estudios fonográficos, 1994.

García, Kay S. "Elena Poniatowska: Search for the Voiceless." *A Dream of Light & Shadow: Portraits of Latin American Women Writers*. Ed. Marjorie Agosín. Albuquerque: U of New Mexico P., 1995. 237-51.

-----------------. *Broken Bars: New Perspectives from Mexican Women Writers*. Albuquerque: U of New Mexico P, 1994.

García Flores, Margarita. "Elena Poniatowska: La literatura es un largo grito." *Cartas Marcadas*. Mexico City: UNAM, 1979.

Hervey, Sándor, Ian Higgins, and Louise M. Haywood. *Thinking Spanish Translation: A Course in Translation Method: Spanish to English*. London: Routledge, 1995.

Johns, Michael. *The City of Mexico in the Age of Diaz*. Austin: U of Texas P., 1997.

Jörgensen, Beth. *Engaging Dialogues: The Writing of Elena Poniatowska*. Austin: U of Texas P, 1994.

------------------. *Texto e ideología en la obra de Elena Poniatowska*. Diss. U of Wisconsin, Madison, 1986. Ann Arbor: UMI, 1986.

Lara, Luis Fernando, ed. *Diccionario del español usual en México*. Mexico City: El Colegio de México, 1996.

Lindstrom, Naomi. "Poniatowska, Elena." *Spanish American Authors: The Twentieth Century*. Ed. Ángel Flores. New York: The H.W. Wilson Company, 1992.

Llanos, Bernardita. "Poniatowska, Elena." Encyclopedia of Mexico: History, Society & Culture. Ed. Michael S. Werner. London: Fitzroy Dearborn, 1997.

Luis, William, ed. *Dictionary of Literary Biography: Modern Latin-American Fiction Writers*. Detroit: Gale Research, 1992.

Mar-Molinero, Clare. *The Spanish Speaking World: A Practical Introduction to Sociolinguistic Issues*. London: Routledge, 1997.

Mattalía, Sonia. "Elena Poniatowska: Cuánto la ira ama." *Quimera: Revista de Literatura* 123 (1994): 52-53.

Meyer, Michael C., and William L. Sherman. *The Course of Mexican History*. 5th ed. New York: Oxford UP, 1995.

Noble, John, et al. *Mexico: A Lonely Planet Travel Survival Kit*. 5th ed. Hawthorn, Australia: Lonely Planet Publications, 1995.

Pino-Ojeda, Waleska. "Literatura de mujeres, mercado y canón: una conversación con Elena Poniatowska." *Revista Chilena de Literatura* 53 (1998): 145-56.

Poniatowska, Elena. *Paseo de la Reforma*. Barcelona: Plaza & Janés Editores, 1997.

----------------------. *La 'Flor de Lis'*. México City: Ediciones Era, 1988.

------------------------. "Hasta no verte Jesús mío." *Vuelta* 24 (1978): 5-11.

"Poniatowska, Elena." *Women Writers of Spanish America: An Annotated Bio-Bibliographical Guide*. Diane E. Marting, ed. New York: Greenwood Press, 1987.

Prado, Marcial. *NTC's Dictionary of Spanish False Cognates*. Illinois: NTC Publishing Group, 1993.

Robinson, Douglas. *Becoming a Translator: An Accelerated Course*. London: Routledge, 1997.

Ross, John. *Mexico: A Guide to the People, Politics and Culture*. London: Latin America Bureau, 1996.

Rubio, Dario. *Refranes, proverbios y dichos y dicharachos mexicanos*. 2nd ed. Mexico City: Editorial A. P. Márquez, 1940.

Rutherford, John. *An Annotated Bibliography of the Novels of the Mexican Revolution of 1910-1917 In English and Spanish*. New York: The Whitston Publishing Company, 1972.

Santucci, Filomena Tavares. *Women in Mexico: An Analysis of Female Characterization in the Fiction of Elena Poniatowska*. Diss. U of Toronto, 1988.

Shimose, Pedro, ed. *Diccionario de autores iberoamericanos*. Madrid: Ministerio de Asuntos Exteriores, 1982.

Skidmore, Thomas E.,and Peter H. Smith. *Modern Latin America*. 4th. ed. New York: Oxford UP, 1997.

Steele, Cynthia. "Entrevista: Elena Poniatowska." *Hispamérica* 18.53-54 (1989): 89-105.

Szanto, George. *Inside the Statues of Saints: Mexican Writers On Culture and Corruption, Politics and Daily Life*. Montreal: Véhicule Press, 1996.

Tenenbaum, Barbara, ed. *Encyclopedia of Latin American History and Culture*. New York: Scribner's, 1996.

Tibón, Carletto. *Lady Cynthia*. Mexico City: Editorial Joaquín Mortiz, 1990.

Turner, Jane, ed. *The Dictionary of Art*. London: Macmillan Publishers, 1996.

Valdez, Josefina Lara and Russell M. Cluff, eds. *Diccionario biobibliográfico de escritores contemporáneos de México nacidos entre 1920 y 1970.* Mexico City: Instituto Nacional de Bellas Artes, 1993.

Venuti, Lawrence. *The Scandals of Translation: Towards an Ethics of Difference.* London: Routledge, 1998.

---------------------. *The Translator's Invisibility.* New York: Routledge, 1995.

Vilches-Norat, Vanessa. "Elena Poniatowska y el testimonio: La recuperación de todo México." *Revista interamericana de bibliografia* 44.2 (1994): 283-89.

Volek, Emil. "Poniatowska, Elena." *Encyclopedia of Latin American Literature.* Ed. Verity Smith. London: Fitzroy Dearborn, 1997.

Werner, Michael S., ed. *Encyclopedia of Mexico: History, Society & Culture.* Chicago: Fitzroy Dearborn, 1997.

Woodrich, Wendy Z. *When the Center no Longer Holds: A Study of the Female Voice in Latin American Testimonial Literature.* Diss. U of Oregon, 1992.

Wright, Ronald. *1992 Mexico & Central American Handbook.* 2nd ed. England: Trade & Travel Publications, 1991.